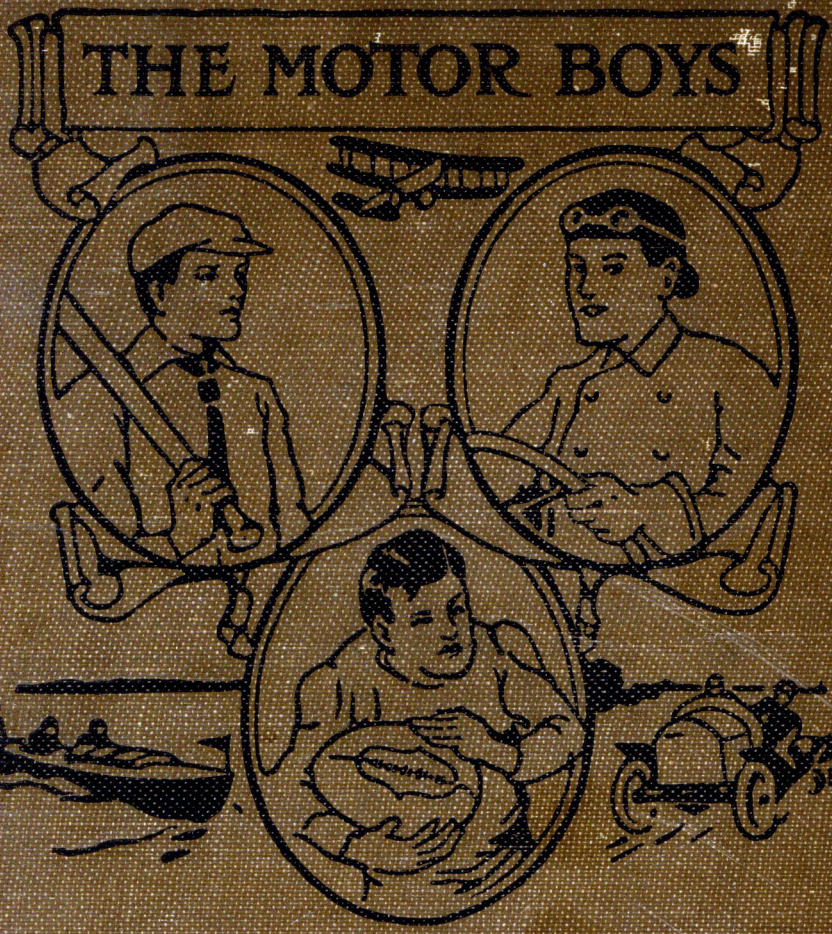

THE MOTOR BOYS ON THE ATLANTIC

CLARENCE YOUNG

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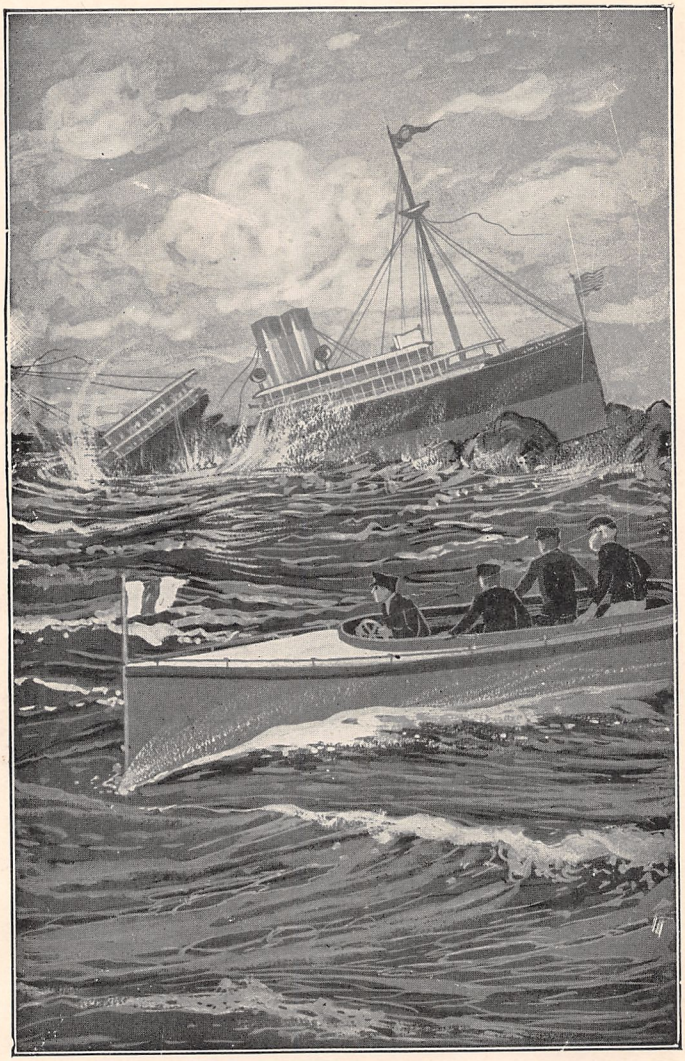

HALF THE STEAMER DISAPPEARED FROM SIGHT BENEATH THE WAVES.

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THE MOTOR BOYS ON THE ATLANTIC

CHAPTER I

LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE

"OH! It's yo heave ho! and never let go, while the stormy winds do blow! blow! blow!"

"Is that you, Jerry Hopkins?" asked a youth, without looking up from a box he was hammering, in the yard back of his home.

"Aye, aye, my hearty! Shiver my timbers messmate, but we're in for a spell of bad weather!" and Jerry walked up to where Bob Baker was trying to drive a nail straight into a piece of board.

"Why this sudden nautical turn?" asked Bob, aiming a hard blow, in hope of correcting a certain wobbly tendency on the part of the nail. "Is there — Wow! Jimminy crickets!" and Bob began dancing about on one foot, while his thumb was stuck in his mouth.

"What's the matter, Chunky?" asked Jerry,

giving Bob the nickname he sometimes was called because of his general fleshiness. "Did you hit your finger?"

"No, I'm doing this for amusement," replied Bob, taking his injured thumb from his mouth and gazing critically at the wounded member. "Um, it's going to swell," he added.

"Put cold water on it," Jerry advised. "That's a good thing. Then wrap it up in arnica."

"Come on into the house," Bob mumbled. "You can tell me the news there, while I'm doctoring up."

"What news?" asked Jerry.

"Why there must be something in the wind when you come around this way, singing sea songs and walking like a sailor on a pitching deck."

"Oh, yes, of course there's some news," Jerry went on. "I forgot about it in the excitement of seeing you do that war dance. Well, it's just as I was singing. It's going to be a life on the ocean wave for me this summer vacation."

"How's that?"

"Mother is going to take a cottage on the Atlantic coast. Maybe I'll not have swell times! I'm going in bathing every day, and I can learn all about a sail boat."

Bob had been so busy looking for the arnica bottle, and a rag in which to wrap his thumb, that he paid little attention to what Jerry was saying, save in a vague sort of way. He caught the last reference to a boat, however, and asked:

"You're not going back on our motor boat, are you, when you say you're going to take up with a sail boat? Jerry I'm ashamed of you!"

"Go back on the dear *Dartaway?* I guess not much," Jerry answered. "But we can't take her down with us, very well. The cottage is too small."

"I don't know about that," Bob said, in rather muffled tones, for he held one end of a string in his mouth and was wrapping the other about the rag on his thumb. I wish we were going to the shore. The folks don't know yet what they will do. There, that feels better. When I turn carpenter again you'll know it."

"What were you making?"

"Oh, the cook wanted something to keep the stove blacking in, and I said I'd make it. Glad it's finished though. Maybe she'll give me something to eat before dinner's ready."

"You don't mean to say you're going to eat again, and breakfast not over more than two hours?"

"There you go, poking fun at my appetite as usual," Bob complained.

"Well, it's hard to forget it, since you always seem to have it with you," Jerry commented, referring to Bob's one failing, if it could be so called.

The Baker family's cook entered the dining room at this point and Bob mentioned that the box she had asked for was finished. Then, while the woman was expressing her thanks, Bob added:

"You haven't got any bread and butter and jam you could spare, have you, Mary?"

"Sure there's lots of it," was the answer. "Though it's not long since I cleared off the breakfast things. Will I bring two plates?"

"Have some, Jerry?"

Jerry tried to struggle between wanting some of the good jam he knew would be brought out, and his desire to maintain his attitude against eating so soon after the morning meal. Bob watched him, and laughed.

"Of course you will, Jerry," he said. "Bring two plates, and plenty of jam."

"Seen Ned since last night?" asked Jerry, as he spread the jam on his bread.

"Nope, but he's coming over this afternoon, and we were going out in the boat," replied Bob,

hardly pausing between the bites. "Want to come?"

"Speak of trolley cars and you'll hear the gong," remarked Jerry, as he looked out of the window and saw Ned Slade across the street. Ned observed his chums at the same instant and came over.

"At it again, Chunky?" he asked, as he saw the refreshments. "How many meals so far to-day?"

"Help yourself," replied Bob, not bothering to defend his character.

Ned lost little time in following his chums' examples, and Bob, with a laugh, rang the bell to have the cook bring more bread and butter. The jam supply still held out.

"Let me make you acquainted with Willie-off-the-Yacht," said Bob, nodding toward Jerry.

"What's the matter? Has he bought a pair of white duck trousers and a cap?"

"Worse and more of it," Bob answered. "He's going to the seashore for the summer, and learn to run a sail boat."

"That's so, it's about time to think of where I'm going this summer," mused Ned. "I heard the folks say something about the mountains, but

I don't know as I care for 'em. Wish we could do as we did last year, and cruise about in the *Dartaway*."

"Why can't we?" asked Bob, spreading another piece of bread. "Jerry says he's going to the shore, where his mother is hiring a cottage. Maybe I can persuade my folks to let me go down along the coast and board; or perhaps they'd go along. Then if you could come, too, Ned, we could take the *Dartaway* with us, and run up and down the shore, and have no end of good times. How about it?"

"Sounds good to me," Ned replied. "I guess we could manage it. How could we get the boat down?"

"Have it boxed and shipped, of course," Bob replied. "It traveled a good way over land before it got to us, and I guess it wouldn't cost much."

"Say, that would be sport!" exclaimed Jerry. "There is just the place for a motor boat where mother is going."

"Where's that?" asked Ned.

"Harmon Beach. There's a sort of cove there, where the boats are sheltered from storms. But you can go through the inlet right out to sea, and

then up and down the coast. The *Dartaway* is big enough to stand a bit of bad weather, if it don't come too strong."

"Then let's do it," exclaimed Bob. "I'll speak to my folks right away, and will you fellows do the same? Then we can talk it over again."

"I'm pretty sure dad is going to the Berkshires," Ned answered, "but I don't have to go with the rest of the family. I'll find out as soon as I can. Are there any good boarding houses at Harmon Beach, Jerry?"

"I don't know much about that part of it, but I'll ask mother to take a larger cottage than she counted on and you two boys can come with me."

"Fine!" cried the others. "That will be the best ever," went on Bob. "Here's your hat, Jerry, go home and ask her right away."

"Well, I like your nerve, Bob Baker!" exclaimed Jerry. "Nice way to treat company! Here's your hat, what's your hurry? I'll come again!" and he pretended to get angry.

"Oh, you know I didn't mean it that way!" cried Bob, fearing he had offended his friend. "It's only that we're anxious, you know. I want —"

"Hark! What's that?" cried Ned, running

to the window, just as the only ambulance the town of Cresville possessed, went by with the gong clanging.

"Something has happened!" exclaimed Jerry. "See all the people running."

The three boys hurried to the front door. The street was filled with a hurrying and excited throng, every one going in the same direction.

"What's the matter?" asked Bob, of a boy running past the house.

"Railroad collision! Lot's killed! Down near the cut crossing!" the lad exclaimed.

"Come on!" Jerry shouted. "Let's go!"

CHAPTER II

THE RAILROAD WRECK

THE boys grabbed up their hats, raced down the steps, and along the street in the direction of the railroad. While they are on their way, the reader may care to ascertain a little more about the three chums, and something of their doings, which have been set forth in previous volumes of this series.

Jerry Hopkins was the son of a well-to-do widow, Bob Baker the offspring of a rich banker, while Ned Slade's father owned a large department store.

The first volume of the series, entitled "The Motor Boys," told how the lads took part in bicycle races, and how one of them won a fine motor cycle. They incurred the enmity of Noddy Nixon, a town bully, and his crony, Bill Berry. The chums had many experiences on their motor cycles, and in a race they won a fine touring automobile. Their adventures, and exciting ones they were, which followed the acquisition of the car, were told of in the second volume, "The Motor

Boys Overland." They went west to search for an old mine, of which a prospector they had befriended had told them. They found the claim, with the aid of Jim Nestor, though they had a close race with Noddy Nixon and Bill Berry to get formal possession.

On their western trip the boys had become acquainted with an old man, Professor Uriah Snodgrass, a naturalist, and he told them of an ancient buried city in Old Mexico. The boys resolved to search for it, and how they succeeded was set forth in the third volume, "The Motor Boys in Mexico." They had several fights with the Mexicans and Bob was kidnapped, but escaped. The ancient city was found, very unexpectedly, as the auto sunk down through a concealed road and coursed along an underground passage. There many strange things occurred, including the discovery of the disappearing reservoir, and a valuable box of jewels.

The boys decided to visit their mine, on their way back to the United States, and it was a good thing they did, as it had fallen into the possession of the plotters, as related in "The Motor Boys Across the Plains." An old hermit, who lived near a lake, proved to be the father of a boy the

three chums rescued from a desperate gang and, later, the hermit was of much assistance in retaining possession of the mine for the motor boys, since he was one of the original prospectors.

The boys returned home after that. They had saved quite a sum of money from their share of the mine profits, and invested it in a fine motor boat, the *Dartaway*. As set forth in the fifth volume of the series, entitled "The Motor Boys Afloat," the three chums transferred their energies to river and lake, and took part in races, foiled the plot Noddy Nixon laid, and solved the mystery of a strange schooner and the robbery of Mr. Slade's store. They had an exciting chase after the thieves, rendering the police much assistance.

All their adventures took place during their school vacations. Now another one was at hand, and, naturally enough, the boys wanted to have as much fun as had fallen to their lot in the past. But, while they were racing to the railroad wreck, their minds were more on that than on what the summer might hold for them.

"I wonder if many are killed?" Bob said.

"Looks as though some were, as there goes the morgue wagon. There must be a number injured, too," Jerry replied. "There go Dr. Bounce, Dr.

Jones and Dr. Hardy," and he pointed to the carriages of the three physicians. The medical men were urging their horses to a gallop.

Following the crowd the boys soon found themselves near the railroad, which swept up to Cresville in a long curve, after passing through a deep cut. It was in this cut where the wreck had occurred. The boys could see, from the top of a little hill, a great crowd gathered about the entrance to the gorge.

"Come on!" cried Ned. "Maybe we can help!"

It was a terrible sight that met the boys' eyes as they entered the narrow cut. As they learned later a defective rail had caused the smash-up. The engine had jumped the track, and crashed into the rocky sides of the defile. The cars had piled on top of the locomotive, and there was a mass of wreckage.

Wheels and trucks were scattered about. The top of one car had been sliced off, and was resting on the coach in front of it. Another car was almost inside of another, and the smoker had mounted the engine tender, the wheels being buried in the coal and water tank.

Fortunately it was summer, and there was no fire in the cars, so the wreckage did not ignite.

The coals from the engine boiler had started a small blaze, but this had been put out.

The train was a through one, not scheduled to stop at Cresville, and there had been comparatively few passengers aboard.

The rescuers were already at work. Several bodies had been carried from the wreck, and placed on beds made from the car seats. One or two silent forms, under shawls and blankets, told, better than words, that death had come swiftly to the unfortunates.

There were several badly injured, and it was to them that the physicians gave prompt attention. The majority of the hurt were women and children, though there were some men. Only the fact that travel was light, just preceding the annual vacation rush, prevented a terrible loss of life.

At first the boys did not know what to do to assist, though they felt they should help, as far as possible. They stood in the front of the crowd, which the railroad men were endeavoring to keep back, and looked on, their hearts palpitating with the terrible sights they witnessed. As they stood there Dr. Bounce, who had just finished bandaging up a man's leg, came past. He knew the three boys, and, as he saw them, he called:

"Here, Jerry, you and your friends come in here and help me, will you? I've got my hands full. One of you carry my medicine case, and the others rummage around and get all the cloth you can for bandages. Tear up the sheets in the sleeper. That is the last car and didn't smash up as badly as the others."

Anxious to take part in the work, and glad to be called on by Dr. Bounce, the boys slipped through the cordon of railroad men, who, at a nod from the physician, let them pass, and followed the doctor.

Jerry took the medical man's valise, containing it's grim instruments and also the healing remedies, and the merciful chloroform to relieve pain. Ned and Bob found their way to the wrecked sleeper. No one was in it, and they got an axe and broke open some of the berths, which were jammed shut. They took out pillows, sheets and blankets, which willing hands soon distributed among the wounded.

The two boys tore the sheets into long strips that Dr. Bounce and the other physicians used to bind up the cuts and bruises of the wounded. As fast as the passengers were taken from the wreck they were put on improvised stretchers and carried out of the dark and gloomy gorge to the level

land beyond, where the doctors could work over them.

Jerry was kept busy attending on Dr Bounce, handing him this instrument or that, and pouring out the medicines under the physician's directions.

The scene was one of confusion and terror. Cries and groans of the wounded mingled with the weeping of those who had lost loved ones in the crash. Then came the noise of axes, hammers and saws on wood, the implements being used to free some imprisoned victims, held down by heavy timbers.

It seemed that all were now rescued who could escape by their own efforts or be carried out by the workers. There only remained the possible dead under the wreck and those who might be held fast in it. The boys had a brief respite from their strenuous labors. They were standing together, hardly able to realize what they had seen and taken part in.

Suddenly a small boy rushed up to where the chums were standing. He seemed greatly excited.

"Come here, quick!" he called.

"What is it, Andy Rush?" asked Bob.

"Man — pinned under a big beam — groaning awful — makes me have the shivers — I tried

to get him — couldn't — head hurt I guess — come on — help me — we'll save his life," and finishing his usual disjointed and rapid-fire remarks Andy hurried off, followed by the three chums on the run.

He led them to the rear end of a telescoped car. There, pinned under a pile of seats, was a gray haired man, his white locks stained with blood. He was groaning feebly.

With a quick eye Jerry saw one particular plank that was holding the others like a wedge. He caught up a hammer and, with a few heavy blows, knocked the splintered timber out of place. Then he and the other boys were able to lift the man out. As they carried him to where the other wounded were lying on improvised cots, the wounded passenger murmured:

"Jess! — Jess! — Where are you? Jess! Jess!"

CHAPTER III

A QUEER OLD MAN

"HERE, Dr. Bounce!" called Jerry, as he and his chums laid the aged man down on a pile of car cushions, "here's a man who needs your attention," and the physician, who was hurrying past, stopped.

"Where did you find him?" he asked.

"Got him out of the wreck," replied Ned.

"Well, you boys are certainly doing good work," Dr. Bounce remarked. He bent over the old man and felt of his head. "Skull fractured," he murmured. "Not much chance."

By this time the ambulance which had made several trips came back, and in it the man the boys had saved was taken to the hospital, being one of the last to go.

Never before had there been such excitement in Cresville. The whole town was aroused, and every one offered some aid to the wounded. There were a number taken to private houses, and cared for there, as the hospital was a small one.

Soon the wrecking crew came, the men working rapidly to get the tracks cleared. Because the smash had occurred in the cut there was no chance to build a temporary track around it, as is sometimes done.

Then came a swarm of reporters from Boston, which was not far from Cresville. They kept the telegraph wires fairly sizzling with dispatches, telling of the terrible wreck.

A big crowd remained at the scene long after the damaged cars and engine had been hauled away, and the line put in shape for use, which was late in the afternoon. The three boys, who, to tell the truth, were nervous and upset from the unaccustomed sights, left shortly after the old man had been taken away.

"Well," remarked Bob, as they strolled back toward his house, "it would be hard to beat that for excitement."

"What were we doing just before it happened?" asked Ned. "It seems like a week ago when we ran out to join the crowd."

"We were talking about going to the shore with our motor boat," Jerry put in.

"Oh, yes. Well, let's see if we can't work that scheme. Suppose you two come over to my house this afternoon," spoke Ned.

His chums said they would, and then the three separated, their minds filled with a strange combination; the pleasures that might be in store for them mingling with the sad memories of the wreck.

Jerry spoke of the boys' plan to his mother at dinner. She took a little time to think it over, and then announced she would try to get a large cottage if possible.

"Ned and Bob can come and stay with you," she said, "that is if their folks will let them. I want to see you all have a good time, and I believe the motor boat will be just the thing at the shore. Only you must be very careful. When I think of some of the things you and your friends went through with, Jerry, it frightens me."

"Well, I guess we can look after ourselves, mother. We've pulled out of some pretty tight places."

Mrs Hopkins wrote a letter to a real estate agent at Harmon Beach, and Jerry was so anxious to have the plan succeed that he did not forget to mail the epistle which his mother gave him to post as he was going out. It was the first time such a thing had occurred in quite a while, as Jerry had a bad habit of forgetting to drop letters in the post-office.

Happy in the anticipation that he and his chums would be able to spend the summer together, Jerry whistled a gleeful mixture of all the sea songs he had ever heard, as he hurried over to Ned's house. He found both his chums there.

"How about it?" asked Ned.

"My part is all right," announced Jerry, "though of course it depended on whether a large-enough cottage can be secured." But he did not think that detail worth bothering about. If worst came to worst he knew he and his chums would sleep on the floor in one room.

"I can go," Bob announced, and Ned chimed in to say his parents had no objections if he was to stay at Mrs. Hopkins's house.

"Then it's all arranged," Jerry said, in boyish confidence. "Now we'll have to overhaul the *Dartaway,* and get her in shape. A new awning would do no harm, and I think we'll need a little heavier anchor."

With boundless enthusiasm the boys began to discuss their plans. They jumped from one thing to another, from the possibility of cruising half way to Florida to doing deep-sea-fishing in their motor boat.

"We'll have the time of our lives," said Bob. "We'll —"

At that instant the door of the sitting room where the chums were opened and Dr. Bounce entered.

"You boys were talking so loudly you didn't hear me knock I guess," he said.

"Is any one sick?" inquired Ned, thinking the medical man had called to attend some one.

"Not here," replied Dr. Bounce, "but there are enough cases in town to keep ten doctors busy. No, I called about that old man you helped get out of the wreck."

"Is he dead?" asked Jerry.

"I'm afraid he can't last long. He regained consciousness a little while ago, and wanted the three boys who took him from under the seats to be sent for. Do any of you know him?"

"Why, no. Did he mention any of us by name?" inquired Bob.

"No, but he insisted he wanted to see the three boys, and I happened to remember it was you who saved him. He seems to have something on his mind. Perhaps it will make him rest more easily if you go to the hospital and see him. It may be only an odd fancy, but sometimes we have to humor our patients. Will you go?"

The boys said they would, and while they were getting their hats Dr. Bounce told them how he

had first gone to Jerry's house and then to Bob's, before he arrived at Ned's.

The hospital was so crowded with patients from the wreck that even the office of the superintendent and some of the doctors' rooms were used. On cots in them were men and women; some badly injured.

The aged man had a small room to himself, as his case was regarded as critical. Dr. Bounce, preceding the three boys, entered. He paused for a few seconds regarding the patient, who seemed to be sleeping. Then the physician turned, and silently beckoned the boys to approach. As they came near the old man opened his eyes and regarded them curiously for a moment.

"Are these the boys you wanted to see?" inquired Dr. Bounce.

"Yes, yes," was the eager reply. The man tried to raise himself in bed, but was so weak he fell back on the pillow.

"Calm yourself," said Dr. Bounce soothingly. "You must not get excited. What did you want of the boys?"

"I want Jess," murmured the man, looking first at one of the boys, and then at the other. "I was on my way to get her, after long years of separation, when there came a terrible blow on my head."

"But what have the boys to do with it, and who is Jess?" asked Dr. Bounce.

"They will find her for me. They know where she is. Where the great light is. They can find her. They are smart boys. I can see that." Then his mind wandered. "I must have my Jess. Maybe she was killed in the wreck! Oh, boys, please find her for me! Perhaps she is pinned down under the seat where you rescued me!"

The chums looked at each other curiously. Dr. Bounce placed his hand on the old man's pulse.

"Tell us who you are," the physician said. "Who is Jess, and how can the boys find her?"

"Jess — Jess — where the great light shines at night,— Bring her to me — I am — I am — Jess — the boys will find you — they will save you! Oh, the awful crash!"

The next instant the old man, who, in his excitement, had risen from the pillow fell backward, and his eyes closed. A terror seemed to grip the boys' hearts. They thought they had seen death come. Dr. Bounce rang a bell to summon a nurse.

"He has become unconscious again after his raving," the doctor said. "I'm afraid my experiment was a failure. Do you know who Jess

is, or what he is referring to about the 'great light,' boys?"

"Not in the least," replied Jerry, and his chums said the same.

"Was any one of that name killed or hurt in the wreck?" Dr. Bounce went on.

"No," replied Bob. "I have looked over the list as published in one of the extras, and all the passengers are accounted for. No one was named Jess."

"Do you suppose he could have meant a dog called Jess?" came from Ned. "He seemed to think some one might be pinned down under the seats where he was."

"But he spoke of going to claim her after a long separation," Dr. Bounce went on, while the nurse was administering medicine to the unconscious patient. "That would apply only to a person. No, I believe Jess is a girl or a woman. There seems to be some mystery connected with her."

"Maybe we will happen to solve it some day," remarked Jerry. "I wonder what he meant by the 'great light?'"

CHAPTER IV

OFF TO THE COAST

"PERHAPS a search light on some vessel," put in Ned. "He looks like a seafaring man."

"I think you boys had better go, now," said Dr. Bounce. "We will have to operate on the patient, but I am afraid it will be a long time before he recovers his senses. If he does and wants to see you, I will let you know. I would like to get at the bottom of this. Strange, he should think you boys could rescue Jess. Stranger still, who is Jess?"

But, for a while at least, there was no prospect of solving the strange meaning of the old man. His condition grew worse, and there was little hope for him.

That night the boys heard that though the operation was performed it was not entirely successful. A piece of bone was pressing on the man's brain, and it was found impossible to remove it until his condition improved. Consequently he remained in a stupor, and could not talk. He murmured, in his delirium, Dr. Bounce said, some-

thing about Jess and the light, and there he stopped.

Three days after the wreck Mrs. Hopkins got a letter from the real estate agent informing her he had been able to secure a large cottage, close to the beach. It was on a small cove, and there was a boathouse near by.

"Fine!" cried Jerry when he heard of it. "Now to get the *Dartaway* ready. Whoop! But life is worth living, I tell you!" and he began to dance a jig with such vigor that the dishes on the sideboard rattled.

"Jerry, you'll smash some of my fine cut glass!" exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins in alarm, yet she could not help being glad that she was able to provide a summer's outing for her son and his chums.

"I'm going over to tell Ned and Bob." Jerry said, rushing from the house. As he hurried down the steps he collided with a youth who was just then passing the house.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Jerry, his breath almost taken away by the sudden impact.

"You did that on purpose! You saw me coming and tried to knock me down!" exclaimed the youth, and Jerry saw it was Noddy Nixon, the old enemy of himself and his chums.

"Why, Noddy," remarked Jerry, much sur-

prised at the sudden encounter and the identity of the youth. "Where did you come from? Haven't seen you since —"

Jerry was about to say he had not met Noddy since the time of the chase after the thieves in the motor boat, and the escape of Bill Berry and Noddy, as told in the fifth volume of this series, "The Motor Boys Afloat." But he thought better of it, and stopped in time.

"Don't you make any references to me," said Noddy, as he rubbed his shin, which Jerry had accidentally kicked. "If you spread any scandals about me I'll have you sued. I've a good notion to have you arrested for assault and battery!"

"Look here, Noddy Nixon!" exclaimed Jerry. "I apologized for colliding with you. That's all I'm going to do. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it," and without a look at the bully Jerry turned and walked off.

"You'll pay for this, Jerry Hopkins," called Noddy. "I'll get even with you."

Jerry had heard Noddy threaten like that before, and, generally the bully had found means to make it very uncomfortable for the chums. But Jerry did not fear him, and he felt he could hold up his own end fairly well. As for his friends, he did not worry on their account.

"I wonder where he's been all this while," Jerry mused, as he continued on toward Bob's house. "He has a queer way of disappearing and coming back at the most unexpected times."

"What's the matter, going into your second childhood, Jerry?" some one asked, and Jerry looked up suddenly, to see Bob standing in front of him.

"Hello, Chunky," he called. "What's that?"

"You were talking to yourself like an old man," explained Bob. "I was getting worried about you."

"Oh, I just had a little run-in with Noddy Nixon," Jerry explained, smiling as he recalled how well his words described what had taken place.

"So he's back, eh? Well, look out for trouble."

"Guess it can't amount to much. We will be away from here in another week."

"Did your mother get the cottage?"

"Sure. Come on, let's tell Ned."

The three boys were soon at Bob's house discussing their plans in detail. Their interest in them made them forget Noddy and the trouble he threatened. But, had they seen a letter which the bully posted a short time after, addressed to Bill

Berry, and accepting a certain invitation, they might have felt a little worried.

"We've got to hustle to get things in shape," said Bob, when the date of departure had been settled. "The first thing is to arrange to have the boat shipped. Let's go over to the freight office and see the agent. I —"

Bob was interrupted at that instant by the entrance of the cook, with a tray of sandwiches and a pitcher of milk.

"Oh," she said. "I didn't know there were three of you here," and she looked at Bob, who grinned sheepishly.

"Chunky!" exclaimed Ned. "Did you order all this for yourself," and he gazed reproachfully at his chum.

"Well you see I told her to get it ready a while ago," explained Bob. "I didn't know then you two were coming over. I went out to post a letter and I met Jerry and we saw you. Then I forgot all about this until — but she'll get some more, won't you Mary?"

"Sure, Master Bob, if you want it."

"I move that Bob be compelled to sit there and see Jerry and I eat all this up," spoke Ned, beginning with a sandwich in each hand.

Poor Chunky looked so woe-begone at this inroad on his rations that his two chums laughed.

"Oh, pitch in!" said Jerry. "I know how you feel, Bob. It must be all of two hours since you had anything to eat."

Over their lunch the boys laid out their work, dividing it among themselves so as to get it all done in time. Bob was to attend to the shipping arrangements, Ned to refitting the boat, and Jerry said he would sort over the portable camping outfit the boys always took with them.

The *Dartaway* was a fine, stanch craft, of four cylinders, as speedy as one could wish. It had many new appliances, such as three speeds forward and one reverse, and was well fitted up. There was a small galley where a meal could be cooked, and a folding table to serve it on. The stove burned gasolene.

There was a portable awning which had side curtains, so the whole boat could be enclosed in stormy weather. There were also collapsible bunks, so, if necessary they could remain on board several days without going ashore. There were food lockers and a good sized storage tank for gasolene.

In anticipation that they might make rather lengthy trips the boys got a larger searchlight for

their craft than the one they had first used, and also a larger saluting cannon. A more reliable compass was added to the equipment, and the size of the whistle was increased, to give better precaution in case of fogs.

An anchor, as large as could be carried, was installed, and, with several other minor, but necessary improvements, the boys felt they had a motor craft second to none for its size.

It was no easy task to box the boat and ship it to Harmon Beach. But the boys worked like Trojans, and accomplished much that less enthusiastic persons would have shrunk from undertaking. Finally they saw the *Dartaway* loaded on a flat car at the freight office.

"Now to get ourselves off," said Jerry.

But this was an easier task. Three days later found Mrs. Hopkins at her summer cottage. It would not be quite correct to say that the boys were there also, for they had no sooner alighted from the train than they hurried to the freight office to see if their boat had arrived.

"There she is!" cried Jerry, pointing to a bulky object on the station platform. "Now for a spin on salt water."

But there was a wait of several hours before the boys' desires were realized. Only their bound-

less enthusiasm and their tireless energy made it possible, but, by evening the boat had been hauled to the small dock near Mrs. Hopkin's cottage, and launched.

The boys did not stop to fully equip her. They saw that the engine was working well, and, just at dusk, three happy, if very tired lads, sat in the *Dartaway* and sent the craft in a wide circle around the little cove on which the colony of Harmon Beach was situated.

"Put out toward Old Briny!" called Ned to Jerry, who was steering, and Jerry, nothing loath, did so.

As the speedy craft surged ahead, throwing up a salty spray, the boys heard a hail behind them.

"Here! Come back!" some one called.

CHAPTER V

CAUGHT IN A SQUALL

"WHO is it?" asked Jerry.

"Seems to be some one in another motor boat," Bob replied. "He's waving at us."

"Maybe he wants a race," suggested Ned.

"Well, he can have it if he catches up to us," Jerry responded. "I'm not going to race otherwise. The *Dartaway* is not in her best trim, and she may get beaten. Then we'll get the name of having a slow boat. We'll have a regular race later, when we are in better shape," and he put on a little more speed.

Still from behind came the cry over the water:

"Come back! Come back!"

"Oh, cut it out!" exclaimed Bob as he felt the salt wind and spray in his face. "We can't bother with you. We're out for a good time. Catch us if you can!"

"Isn't this glorious!" exclaimed Ned. "Say, but I'm glad we came!"

The *Dartaway* had increased her speed consid-

erably and was fairly flying through the water. The boys could no longer hear the hailing of the lone man in the boat behind, though they could still see him coming after them.

"Guess if he wants a race he'll feel sort of discouraged," Jerry remarked, as he put the wheel over a bit to meet an oncoming wave.

"Funny sort of a chap," said Bob. "Thinks we ought to stop for him, I s'pose."

The craft was now approaching one of the two points of land which enclosed the cove of Harmon Beach. The wind, which had been blowing quite strongly, increased in volume and the water became a little rougher. Still there had been just as much disturbance on Lake Cantoga, where the boys had cut their eye teeth in running a boat, and they were not alarmed.

It was getting dusk now, and, off to the east there was a curious haze hanging over the water. Jerry, who was peering sharply ahead, remarked:

"Looks like breakers beyond," for he had caught sight of some white caps.

"We don't mind them," said Ned. "I guess our boat is strong enough to navigate through 'em."

"Our friend seems to have given up trying to catch us," Bob said.

"He never had a chance," came from Ned.

"Hold hard!" Jerry suddenly cried. "Look out!"

An instant later a shower of spray flew over the boat, wetting the boys.

"Hurrah! It's salt water!" yelled Ned.

"Old Briny!" cried Bob.

"Of course it is," spoke Jerry, as he wiped the water from his eyes. "We're right out on the ocean now."

"Really?" asked Ned, hardly able to believe it.

"Sure," Jerry added. "We've gotten beyond the point of the cove and it's open water ahead of us now. Europe lies just beyond. Shall we put for it?"

Another dash of spray caused the boys to duck.

"Not to-night," came from Bob. "There's nothing on board to eat."

"You'd think of that if you were headed straight for Davy Jones's locker," exclaimed Ned. "Why can't you forget it, Chunky?"

"This sea air gives me such an appetite," replied the stout youth.

"Well, we haven't anything on board to —" began Ned, when his remarks were suddenly interrupted by a roll of the boat that nearly threw him over the side.

"Look out!" cried Jerry. "Here comes a big wave!"

Almost as he spoke there was a rush of greenish-white water and something more substantial than spray came aboard the *Dartaway*.

At the same instant there was an increase in the force of the wind, which fairly howled overhead, and sent the spume from the crests of the waves with stinging force into the faces of the boys.

"What is it?" panted Bob, as he tried to get his breath, after swallowing a mouthful of salt water.

"We seem to have gotten out to sea in a hurry," replied Jerry.

"It's beginning to rain!" yelled Ned.

Then everything seemed blotted out by a gray blanket of mist, caused by the drenching downpour. The boys were wet through in an instant, though they tried to cover themselves with some pieces of canvas.

In their hurry to get the boat into the water they had not set the awning. In fact the craft was not at all equipped for a trip, beyond the fact that she could go, since there was plenty of gasolene in the tank.

The *Dartaway* was rocking and bobbing about on the rough water, for, once beyond the protec-

tion of the cove, the full force of the waves and wind was felt.

"Turn around, Jerry!" yelled Bob.

"Yes! Put back!" cried Ned.

"Too risky!" sung out Jerry. "I've got to keep her head into the wind," and he swung the wheel around to meet a big wave.

The crested roller of green water struck the boat half broadside on. Considerable came aboard, but the *Dartaway,* after staggering a bit under the weight, rose to it like a duck, and went on. Jerry started the automatic pump and the water was soon forced out.

"Say, we are in for it!" Bob yelled.

"It's nothing but a squall!" Jerry called back. He did not have time to turn around, because he had to devote all his attention to the wheel.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ned, shouting the words out. Indeed nothing less than a yell could have been heard above the roar of the wind, the swish of the rain and the splash of the water as it struck the side of the little craft.

"Going to keep on," replied Jerry grimly. "It's all I can do. If I turn back I'll be swamped. Maybe I can run into a quiet cove, somewhere along the beach."

The squall was now raging in all its sudden,

but short-lasting fury. Though the boys realized it would not keep up its capers very long, they knew that their position was anything but a safe one. It was nearly dusk, with the dying light of sunset hidden by the mist and clouds.

Still, as Jerry had said, there was nothing to do but keep on. By doing so the bow of the boat could be held so as to cleave the waves. To turn meant to get them broadside on and this would soon swamp the craft.

"Isn't there some place we can put in to?" yelled Ned.

"Don't know of any," Jerry called back.

Down came the rain, harder than before, and the wind seemed to howl in glee at the plight of the boys. The craft was tossing to and fro on the waves, which, while not of any extraordinary size, were almost too big for the *Dartaway*. They would have amounted to nothing for a larger boat, with more freeboard than had the motor craft.

Ned and Bob crouched in the bottom of the boat, to render it more steady, while Jerry clung to the wheel, which now and then was almost jerked from his hand by the force of the water on the rudder.

Every now and then the salt spray would dash over the craft, adding its saline dampness to that

caused by the rain. It was now quite dark, with the rain making it all the more difficult to see. Jerry tried to pierce the gloom, for he had no more idea where he was going than a blind man. He knew he had started to pass out of the harbor of Harmon Beach, between the two points of land, and that he was steering east then. But, whether he had kept the boat headed in that direction was a question he could not answer.

In spite of it all the *Dartaway* was behaving admirably. She stood up to the attack of the waves and wind like a veteran. It was her baptism of the Atlantic, and she seemed to rejoice in it.

"Hark! I hear something!" cried Ned.

The boys listened as well as they could above the throbbing of the engine. Over the storm-swept waters there sounded three long whistles.

"It's a boat!" cried Bob. "Look out, or she'll run us down!"

"Can't tell where she is," Jerry answered, his hand on the lever to stop the engine in an instant.

"It's behind us," Ned shouted, standing up and trying to see to the rear.

Once more the whistle sounded. This time it was clearer, and in spite of the roar of the wind and the swish of the waves the boys could hear the throb of a boat engine.

"Some one is coming after us!" exclaimed Bob.

Just then, through the mist of the storm there shone a great light, full on the *Dartaway*. It flashed a glaring beacon on the boat, and then suddenly it turned red, flashed twice, and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI

THE RACE

"WHAT was that?" cried Ned.

"Lightning!" came from Bob.

"Lightning doesn't act that way!" Jerry replied. He put the wheel over to meet an on-coming roller. As he did so the queer light flashed out again. First it was white, and then it changed to red, showing twice and going out.

"It's a lighthouse!" cried Jerry. "I forgot there is one near here. It's near a dangerous ledge of rocks, which are off shore."

"Then we'd better stop!" cried Ned. "We may sink the boat."

"Can't turn around now. Too risky."

Suddenly three sharp whistles sounded so close to the *Dartaway* that the boys jumped in fright. They thought they were about to be run down. Then came a hail:

"Say, what you chaps trying to do? Commit suicide?"

"Who are you?" called Jerry, slowing down the engine.

"This is the *Three Bells*. Who are you?"

"*Dartaway*."

"Where from?"

"Harmon Beach."

Out of the mist there loomed up alongside of the boys' boat another motor craft. It was nearly twice the size of theirs, and the throb of the engine, though it was running slow and on low gear, told better than words of the power of it.

The rain ceased, almost as suddenly as it had started and the fury of the squall, having blown itself out, subsided. The wind died away, and, though there was a long swell on, the storm was practically over. It grew a little lighter with the dispersing of the mist.

The boys sized up the newcomer. The boat was about fifty feet long, and had a small cabin. It was operated by a gasolene motor of eight cylinders. Beside it the *Dartaway* looked small.

"Are you the boys who sailed out of the cove this evening?" asked the steersman of the *Three Bells*.

"I guess we are," Jerry replied. He had stopped his engine, as had the skipper of the other craft, which contained two men.

"Didn't you hear some one hail you?"

"Yes," said Jerry. "We thought it was some one wanting to race, and we weren't in trim for a brush. We haven't got our boat fixed up yet, so we decided to pay no attention to it. Was it you?"

"No, it was one of the coast fishermen," replied the captain of the *Three Bells*.

"Did he want to race?" asked Ned, curious to understand why a fisherman should want to challenge them.

"Race? I guess not," was the man's reply. "Why he was calling you to come back because he saw the squall coming up. He sized you up for newcomers at the beach, and knew you probably didn't know anything about the weather here. We have some pretty bad storms, and they come up in an instant and without warning. The fisherman was able to see it getting ready to break, and he didn't want you to venture out. But it seems you went, anyhow."

"Yes, and we had quite a time," returned Jerry. "But the *Dartaway* stood it all right."

"More good luck than good management," was the comment. "Why, half the people at the beach probably believe you drowned by now."

"How's that?" asked Bob.

"The fisherman, when he saw he couldn't catch you, came back and gave the alarm."

"I wonder if my mother is worried," Jerry said. "We must hurry back."

"Did you come out for us?" asked Bob of the *Three Bells'* captain.

"That's what I did," was the answer. "I knew how risky it was out here, in a small boat, so I hustled out after you. You must have gone a pretty good clip, for I couldn't catch you for some time."

"Well, the *Dartaway* has some speed," admitted Jerry with a little note of pride in his voice.

"We'll have to enter her in the races next week. Oh, by the way, allow me to introduce myself. I'm Captain James Jenkinson."

Jerry told his own name, and those of his companions.

"Well, the squall's about over now," said Captain Jenkinson. "I guess it's safe enough to go back. Are you all right?"

"All except being wet through," Ned replied.

"And hungry," put in Bob, whereat his chums laughed.

"I can give you a tow back," Captain Jenkinson went on. "We might make it a little quicker."

"I guess the *Dartaway* can make it under her

own power," Jerry said. He was not going to accept any assistance not really needed.

"All right," Captain Jenkinson responded, probably understanding how the boys felt. "You can follow me in, as I can probably pick out the best channel for you."

This aid the boys had no compunctions about accepting, and, as Jerry turned the gasolene on, and shoved the spark lever over, the *Dartaway* shot ahead. Jerry steered her in a curve after the *Three Bells,* which was heading back toward the harbor.

"I say!" called Captain Jenkinson.

"What is it?" cried Jerry.

"If you ever come out this way again, look out for the rocks. They're indicated by a red and white striped bouy for days, but the lighthouse marks them by night. They're bad ones, so look out."

"Thanks, we will," shouted Bob.

It was now very dark, but the lights of the *Three Bells* enabled the boys to follow her. She made a fast pace, but the *Dartaway* was no slow boat, and in about an hour Jerry swung his craft into the little cove.

"See you to-morrow perhaps," called Captain Jenkinson, as he increased the speed of his craft,

and steered toward the boathouse on the opposite shore to where Mrs. Hopkins had her cottage.

"Good-bye!" shouted the boys.

A few minutes later the *Dartaway* was at her dock, and three soaking wet, and somewhat tired, but very proud boys strolled up to the cottage.

"Good boat we've got," observed Jerry. "Hard to beat, eh, fellows?"

"Now you're talking," said Bob. "I believe we could cross the Atlantic in her — if we could take along enough to eat," he added quickly.

The boys found Mrs. Hopkins so busy with the servants arranging the cottage, that she had hardly given the lads a thought. She did not even know they had gone out in the boat, so the storm had not worried her. However, a number of the cottagers, who paid more attention to the boating affairs, had heard of the boys' peril and were relieved to learn they got back safely. There was no small appreciation of their pluck, after Captain Jenkinson had told of the affair.

When Mrs. Hopkins heard of it she was, at first, much frightened over the danger the boys had escaped. But Jerry assured her they could look out for themselves, and, on his promise to use all precautions thereafter in going out of the

cove in the boat, his mother placed no restrictions on his actions.

For three days after this the boys were kept busy fixing up their craft. They put the new saluting cannon in the bow, strung new rudder lines, which had been strained during the squall, and cleaned the engine. They were burnishing up the brass work, one afternoon, when some one entered the boathouse.

"Where are the three boy sailors?" a hearty voice asked.

"Come in!" cried Jerry, and Captain Jenkinson entered.

"Hard at work, eh?" he asked. "That's right, can't take too much care of your boat and engine. They do better work the more time you put on them, and you never can tell when you may need an extra bit of speed."

Captain Jenkinson told the boys of some informal races that had been arranged among the owners of motor boats. There were half a dozen, he said, who had entered their craft, and he asked if the boys did not want to take part in the contest.

Of course they were delighted, and the captain said he would arrange to have them formally en-

tered. The races were to take place in the cove the next Tuesday. The course was a triangular one, about three miles in all, and the prize was a silver cup.

In the interval the boys found time to take several short cruises. They found their craft was working well, and, in several little impromptu contests, they "put it all over the other boats," to use Bob's expression.

There were seven entries for the race, including the *Dartaway*. As Captain Jenkinson's boat was so powerful, and outclassed the others so much, he did not enter but allowed the judges to use her.

"Do you think we have any chance?" asked Ned, the morning of the contest.

"Sure," replied Jerry, who was going to steer. "I don't say we'll win, but we'll come near it. You and Bob want to keep the engine well oiled. Guess I'll rig up a spare set of batteries, in case of accident. I'll have 'em ready to switch on in a second if the magneto or the regular batteries fail."

"The only boat I'm afraid of is the *Snail*," said Ned. "She's just the opposite to her name, and the other day she went way ahead of us."

"Our engine wasn't sparking good that time," Jerry remarked.

The race was a handicap one,— that is the boats were graded according to the size of their cylinders and the horse-power of the engines. This grading made the *Dartaway* and *Snail* take fourth place. Three other boats started off ten seconds ahead of them, and two large boats ten seconds after them.

The cove was dotted with craft the afternoon of the race. It was hard to keep them clear of the course, but by dint of circling around it several times Captain Jenkinson was able to make the owners of other boats understand he meant business.

At the crack of a revolver the three first boats started off, the explosions of their engines, from which the mufflers had been taken, sounding like a battery of Gatling guns in full action.

The three boys nervously awaited the signal that was to send them off. Jerry kept watch of those aboard the *Snail*, which contained three youths.

Crack! went the pistol, and Jerry threw in the first speed clutch, for, as in the case of the other boats, the engine had been kept running, though not in gear.

The *Dartaway* jumped ahead like a hungry fish after a small frog. Likewise did the *Snail,* and,

with the engines working almost at full speed the two rival craft surged through the water.

Side by side they kept. Jerry threw in second gear and the captain of the *Snail* did likewise. Jerry decided to run on that for a while, and trust to the power of the motor, which Ned and Bob were looking after.

Jerry dimly heard the revolver shot that sent the two last boats off. But he did not care for them. He wanted to overhaul those in the lead. This he seemed in a fair way to be able to do. None of the craft was speedy, and, though their ten seconds start gave them an advantage, the *Dartaway* was soon close to the rear one.

Notch by notch Jerry gave the engine more gasolene, and, notch by notch he advanced the spark lever. He was crouching down low, as were the other boys, to offer less resistance to the wind. Slowly the *Dartaway* was creeping up to one of the leading boats, and a little later passed it. Then it overhauled another.

Just as the first leg of the triangular course was rounded Jerry threw in the third speed, and shut off a little of the power. At the same instant he passed the last one of the three boats that had gotten off first and the *Dartaway* was now in the

lead. A thrill possessed him. The *Dartaway* might win.

But, as he turned his head, he saw that the *Snail* had also crept up, until, passing the others, it was on even terms with the boys' boat. The *Dartaway* was not going to have things her own way.

Jerry had no thought for the other craft now. It was a contest with the *Snail* only. The two boats were evenly matched and those aboard knew best how to get the speed out of them.

It was bow and bow between the two, almost to the second stake. Then Jerry slightly advanced the spark lever and the *Dartaway* shot ahead. Only for an instant, however, as the *Snail* was right after her.

"I'd like to lose her," thought Jerry.

He gave one look behind him. The two boats which had started last were close up, but Jerry had no fear of them. The engine of one, he could tell by the sound, was missing explosions, and the other was wheezing and coughing in a way that indicated loss of power. It was now a race between the *Dartaway* and the *Snail*.

They were on the last leg. Jerry could hear the shouts of the excited spectators. It was a race worth seeing.

Douse her with oil," called Jerry. "On the bearings, only, don't flood the cylinders!"

Ned and Bob were busy over the machinery. Jerry was holding the wheel firmly, watching, from the corner of his eyes, the progress of the *Snail*. He thought he saw her falling back a little, and he used a little of his reserve power.

Suddenly, with a wheeze that sent a chill to the hearts of the boys, the *Dartaway's* engine ceased to work, and the *Snail* shot ahead.

CHAPTER VII

"THERE SHE BLOWS"

"WHAT's the matter?" cried Jerry.

"Don't know," replied Bob. "Something's broken."

"It's the batteries or magneto," Ned exclaimed. There's no spark!"

"Quick! Throw on the new set of batteries I put in," called Jerry. "Lively now! Maybe she'll explode without cranking!"

Bob shoved over the switch that Jerry had provided for just such an emergency. There was a click, a little spurt of green fire as the two pieces of copper came together, and, with a sound like a gun, the engine resumed its revolutions. A charge in one of the cylinders had exploded, and had turned the fly wheel over, just in time to render it unnecessary to crank up.

"Hurrah! She's off!" cried Ned.

With a quick motion Jerry threw the engine back on first speed, as he wanted to give it a chance to work up before he called on it for a harder effort.

But the accident was likely to prove dear to the

Dartaway. One of the boats in the rear had almost caught up to her, and the *Snail* was a good five lengths ahead.

"We've got to strain everything now," said Jerry grimly. "It's a small chance but we'll take it."

Quickly he speeded up the engine, giving the cylinders all the gasolene they would take, and he also began to advance the spark.

As soon as he could he threw in the third speed gear. The *Dartaway* responded nobly, and fairly shot through the water. The *Snail's* lead was cut down by one length.

One advantage the accident gave was the bringing into use of fresh batteries. This gave a better and hotter spark, and rendered the explosions more powerful. Jerry saw this, and his heart rejoiced.

Notch by notch he shoved the two levers around and the boat increased her speed. Those in the *Snail* looked back apprehensively.

"We'll catch you yet," Jerry murmured. "How's she running, Ned?"

"Couldn't be better."

"Don't spare the oil, and keep low down. We're right against the wind now, and everything counts."

Slowly but surely the *Dartaway* was overhauling the *Snail.* Inch by inch she crept up. Now the leading boat was but two lengths ahead. But the last stake was close at hand. Five minutes more and the race would be over. There was a big lead to cut down in a short time.

Jerry shut his teeth tightly. It was if he, himself, was running the race, and was determined to win or die. He gave one look towards the stakeboat and another at *Snail,* and then shoved the sparking lever over as far as he dared, at the same time giving the cyclinders the utmost gasolene they could take without being choked and floated.

It was the last effort, the utter limit to which the *Dartaway* could be pushed.

The craft responded, as if knowing what was required of her. She seemed to rise like a bird under the increased impulse, and to fairly skim over the water. She darted ahead, and, with hearts that beat high with hope, the boys saw her creep past the stern of the *Snail,* until the bows of the two boats were once more even.

The stake was three hundred feet ahead. The *Dartaway* must do an inch or two better if she was to win. Those aboard the *Snail* were doing their utmost to get another revolution or two from their engine.

Jerry and his companions almost held their breaths. They peered over the side to see what their rivals were doing. They saw them frantically oiling the levers and cams.

"Only an inch! Only an inch!" Jerry whispered under his breath. "Only an inch and we can beat 'em!"

Then, whether it was that the *Dartaway* heard the cry and responded, or whether the *Snail's* engine went back on the boat, no one could tell, but the *Dartaway* shot ahead, several inches. There was an exultant cheer from the three boys. There was a corresponding groan from those on the *Snail.* There was a great shout from the spectators.

An instant later the *Dartaway* crossed the line a winner..

What a shrill tooting of whistles there was! What a chorus of shouts and yells! What a sound of gasolene engines exploding on all sides to add to the din.

Bang! it was a cannon on the *Three Bells,* fired in honor of the victor.

Bang! spoke the *Dartaway's* ordnance in reply.

Then there were more cheers and yells. Jerry, in answer to a signal, slowed down his craft and

put it over to the *Three Bells,* where the judges were. The *Snail* followed.

"A good race and well managed," said Captain Jenkinson. "I thought you boys were out of it when your engine stopped. How did you manage it?"

Jerry told him of the extra batteries, and was congratulated for his forethought.

"You certainly have a fine boat," the captain of the *Snail* said, as he shook hands with Jerry and his chums. "You beat us fairly and squarely."

"Yes, and here's your reward," said Captain Jenkinson, as he handed Jerry a beautiful silver cup. "May it be an incentive to you and your comrades to win many more races."

"Speech! Speech!" cried several. The judges' boat was surrounded by a score of craft, which hemmed in the *Dartaway* and the *Snail.*

"I can't make a speech," Jerry stammered. "But I want to thank you all for allowing us to take part in this race, and if any one wants to have another try for the cup, why he can, that's all."

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd.

"I may take you up on that offer," said Captain Jones, owner of the *Snail.* "I believe I can beat you yet."

"You're welcome to try," Jerry answered.

The boys were hardly able to realize their good luck. They had snatched the race from defeat, and the skillful way in which they had managed their boat brought them much praise.

There were several other acquatic events that afternoon. It was a sort of opening of the summer season at Harmon Beach, which was quite a resort for those who loved the sea. The boys did not stay long, however, as Jerry was anxious to show his mother the cup he and his chums had won.

As the boys were fastening their boat to the dock, they heard a noise in the shelter house. At first they thought it might be Mrs. Hopkins, who had come down to meet them. But they heard a hoarse voice singing:

"Oh it's blow, blow, blow!
And to Davy's locker we'll go.
For a stormy night
Is my delight;
And I love the hail and snow!"

An instant later a short, stout man, with one eye, a grizzled beard, rather ragged clothes, the trousers of which he kept hitching up, while he

rolled his lone optic around in a strange fashion, came out on the dock from the boathouse.

"What ho! my hearties!" he cried. "Avast, messmates!"

"Who are you?" asked Jerry.

"Salt Water Sam. A relic of the deep seas."

"Glad to see you," remarked Bob. The lads took the old man for a harmless character, and paid little attention to him. For a while Salt Water Sam regarded the boys with his one eye, and then, singing his verse once more, he walked off with a rolling gait.

"Old sailor," said Ned. "I'd like to know him."

"You'll probably have a chance. He seems to make himself at home," remarked Jerry.

For several days after this the boys only made short trips about the cove in their boat. They took Mrs. Hopkins out, and she enjoyed the little cruises very much. Jerry wanted to take her out on the ocean but she would not hear of it. She said she was afraid the boat would swamp.

"You'd ought to have been with us the other night," said Jerry. "I guess that would have scared you."

"Don't you ever take such risks again," cau-

tioned Mrs. Hopkins, and the boys promised they would not. But boys are very forgetful.

The *Dartaway* was now fully equipped "from anchors to apricots," as Bob said. He had superintended putting aboard a quantity of provisions including the canned fruit which, he said, could be used in case of emergency.

One afternoon, as the boys were cruising near shore, they saw a fisherman's boat come in. It was the kind of craft with a small engine, called a "kicker," in it, to be used in case of calm.

As it tied up alongside of a small public dock, the boys could see, by the manner of the men, that something had happened. They were much excited.

"What's the matter?" they heard several ask.

"There's a whale off shore," replied the captain. "We found our nets all ripped up, and, as we were wondering what did it, we saw a big whale spout, close by."

"What's that? A whale?" cried a hoarse voice, and the boys saw Salt Water Sam come rolling down to the dock. "A whale!" Shiver my timbers, there she blows!" he cried, seeming to get excited at the mention of the name. "Let me get at him. Many a one I've harpooned!"

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER THE WHALE

THERE was considerable excitement on the dock. The news soon spread that one of the monsters of the deep had been sighted off the beach, and a number of boats were gotten ready to go out for a glimpse of the whale.

"Here's our chance," said Ned. "Why can't we go out and have a look at him? I never saw a whale in the ocean."

"Neither did I, nor anywhere else," Jerry replied. "I guess we can go."

"Hi there!" hailed a voice, and the boys saw the old sailor beckoning to them. "Avast! I want to speak to you. Avast! Belay!"

"Shall we see what he wants?" asked Jerry.

The old man was dancing about on the dock, hitching his trousers up so often that Bob remarked he would wear them out in a short time at that rate. His one eye was rolling about trying to see in half a dozen directions at once.

"Can't do any harm to learn what he wants," Ned replied. "Put her over, Jerry."

Accordingly the *Dartaway* was steered toward the dock, on which there were quite a number of persons. Several were getting boats ready to go off and get a view of the big creature.

"Steady now, my hearties!" exclaimed the old sailor. "That's the way to do it! Couldn't have done it any better myself!" as Jerry brought the boat up alongside of the dock without hitting the string piece.

"Did you call us?" asked Bob.

"Sure, son, I want you to take me out so we can kill that whale. Shiver my timbers, but it's like old times again!"

"Did you ever kill whales?" asked Ned.

"Did I? Say you don't know me! '

Then, rolling up his sleeves and disclosing two very hairy and much tattooed arms he sang in a high, quavering voice:

"I've traveled in the North sea.
I've traveled in the South
I've killed a whale
With the biggest tail
And the smallest kind of a mouth!"

"That's me! That's Salt Water Sam!" he went on. "Now boys, if you wait a minute I'll

go after my harpoon and line, and we'll have a whale chase as is a chase."

Before the boys could reply, the old sailor ran from the dock toward a little shanty that stood on the beach. When he was gone Jerry asked:

"Shall we risk it, fellows?"

"Maybe he's only joking?" Bob said. "He doesn't look as if he knew how to harpoon a whale."

"Let's take him along, anyhow," Ned put in. "He'll know a lot about the ocean, and we can ask him about the lighthouses and the rocks, even if we don't see him kill a whale."

In a few minutes the old man came back again. On his head he carried a tub, while over his shoulder was a long pole. He ran down to the dock with a speed surprising in so old a person.

"There she is!" he cried, as he reached the boat. "There's the iron that sent many a good whale, and some bad ones, too, maybe, to the boiling kettles. There she is!"

It was a harpoon that he had; an old implement, and one that had seen service, to judge by the look of it. It was rusty, and the wooden handle was full of notches.

"Them's the number of whales she's been into," said Salt Water Sam, proudly, pointing to

the cuts. "I did every one myself. And this tub and line — well they've seen service, just the same as their owner. They're old but you can depend on 'em."

While he was speaking he had boarded the boat, and was arranging the tub, with its coil of line in the bottom, at the bow. Then he sat down near Ned, and, taking out a file, began sharpening the barb of the harpoon.

"Let her go, skipper," said Sam, to Jerry, and, at a nod from the latter, Bob cranked the engine, and the *Dartaway* was steered out toward the open sea.

"Any danger of a storm?" asked Ned, of the old sailor. He did not want to get caught as they had been before.

"Clear as a bell, and it'll stay so 'till dog watch," the sailor replied, not looking up from the delicate operation of putting a finer point on his weapon.

"I'm afraid we'll see very little of the whale," remarked Bob. "All the other boats are ahead of us, and they'll scare him off so we'll miss him."

"Don't let that worry you, sonny," said Sam. "Trust an old whaleman to find the creatures if they're within seeing distance. Put her right

between the two points, lad, there's less current there, and you'll skim along like one of Mother Carey's chickens," he added to Jerry.

Jerry speeded up the engine, and the *Dartaway* fairly flew through the water. Ahead was quite a flotilla of sail and motor boats, crowded with persons anxious to get a view of the sea monster.

"It's a sweet little craft you have here, lads," Sam remarked, having satisfied himself that the harpoon was sharp enough. "Almost as fast as the *Dolly Gray,* in which I made my first voyage to the whaling grounds. Ah, but she was a lovely schooner."

Sam now began fastening the line to the weapon. He took great care in this, and Ned and Bob watched him curiously. Then he saw to it that the line was properly coiled in the tub.

"Can't be too careful," the sailor remarked. "If it snarls why it's all up with the whale and you, too."

"Is there going to be any danger?" asked Bob, in some alarm.

"Not with Salt Water Sam aboard," was the sailor's reply. "You leave it to me."

By this time the *Dartaway* was up with the last of the boats, and, a little later had overhauled

some of them. Ten minutes more and she had passed the points of the harbor and the boys found themselves out on the open Atlantic.

The water was calm, and there was scarcely a breeze to ruffle the surface. There was a long gentle swell, but the lads soon became used to this.

"Now, boys," said Sam, "if you'll do as I tell you we'll be all right. I'm going to stand in the bow, and, skipper, you send her forward or back, as I tell you. If we strike the whale you want to send her astern like lightning, or there'll be a mess."

"Aye aye, sir!" answered Jerry, somewhat inclined to laugh at the old man's earnestness.

"That's the way to talk," said Sam. "Put her out a little more, skipper. I want to clear some of these craft."

Jerry manœuvred so as to round a number of other power boats, which seemed to be headed for one spot. They were evidently steering for where the whale had last been seen.

"He was headed up the coast," Sam murmured. "We'll point up that way, and maybe we can land him before the others scare him away."

It was here that the old sailor's knowledge of whales and their ways stood him in good stead.

He knew the creature would not merely float around on the water, but would dive, and swim beneath the surface. He had made inquiries and learned that the monster was headed up the coast.

The *Dartaway* was now comparatively alone, there being no other boats within a quarter of a mile. The rest were hovering near where the big creature had been seen to go down.

"If he comes up under one of those boats it will be all day with 'em," observed Ned.

Salt Water Sam was standing in the bow, beside Jerry, who was at the wheel. The old man peered ahead with his one keen eye. He was as still as though the carved figurehead of a vessel; every muscle was tense, every nerve on the alert. The joy of battle shone in his face.

Suddenly, just ahead of the *Dartaway,* there was a commotion in the water. It seemed to boil and bubble. Then something big and black was flung up from the hidden depths.

At the same instant two thin columns of water shot up from the surface of the ocean. Up and up they went, sparkling in the sun.

"There she blows! There she blows!" yelled Sam. "Send her ahead, boys!"

CHAPTER IX

TOWED TO SEA

WITH hearts that beat hard and fast in the excitement of the moment, the three boys stood up to catch a glimpse of the ocean monster. It was the first whale they had ever seen, and they never had expected to view one in its native element.

Jerry's hand trembled so he could scarcely send the sparking lever forward, to increase the speed of the craft. As it clicked over the rachet the *Dartaway* shot ahead. Sam, standing up in the bow, poised his arm to hurl the harpoon. Then, as though alarmed by the approach of the boat, and probably mistrusting the throbbing of the engine, the whale "sounded."

With a turn of it's massive flukes, it sunk downward into the depths whence it had emerged but a few minutes before to breathe.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Bob.

"Quiet!" cautioned Sam. "That's nothing." He was speaking in a whisper. "Got to expect that. We'll land him yet. Put her a little

further out, skipper, and stand ready to go astern when I give the word."

Slowing down the engine, Jerry steered the boat in obedience to motions from Sam's hand. The old man kept his eye fixed on the water, as though he could see into the depths, and watch the whale coursing forward.

Whether he could or not his instinct seemed to tell him about where the creature would rise. The *Dartaway* had been sailing along not more than ten minutes when again came that curious boiling and bubbling of the water.

This time it was off to the left, about a quarter of a mile away. There was no need to tell Jerry in which direction to steer. He increased the speed of the engine, and was darting toward the spot, when once more the whale spouted.

"There she blows!" cried Bob, unable to withhold his enthusiasm.

"Easy now," cautioned Sam. "We don't want to frighten him again. "Put me close, skipper."

Jerry slowed down the motor, so as to make less noise and threw the wheel over. Nearer and nearer the craft approached the big creature, that was resting easily on the surface of the ocean.

But again they were doomed to disappoint-

ment. They were within a short distance of the monster, but not close enough to enable Sam to throw the harpoon, when the whale, with a mighty blow of its flukes, which raised a wave that careened the *Dartaway,* sank into the depths.

"We'll never get him!" cried Ned.

"Leave it to Salt Water Sam," was the old man's reply.

Once more he scanned the water with his keen eye. Again Jerry, obeying the motions of his hand, sent the boat forward. The boys were now quite a distance from shore, and there was no other craft near them. The flotilla of boats was two miles away, still cruising around where the whale had first been seen, and the occupants looking for the monster were too far off to see what those in the *Dartaway* were about.

"Get ready!" came the old sailor's voice, and, once more the boys' hearts beat violently. Sam motioned for Jerry to steer the boat to the right. Hardly had the direction been changed than again there was that curious bubbling, and the whale spouted for the third time.

"He must be hurt!" said Sam, in a low tone. "Or else he wouldn't come up so often to breathe. I think I can land him this time. Easy now! Right for him, skipper!"

Jerry was calmer now. He held the wheel steadily, and his hands did not tremble as he shoved the levers over. Old Sam gave a last look at the coils of line in the tub to see that they were free.

Closer and closer to the monster the boat approached. The boys could see the black sides glistening in the sun. It seemed that the whale was a thousand feet long, though as Sam told them afterward, it was only one of the smallest species. But to the boys it was large enough.

At a signal from the old man, Jerry shut off the engine, almost completely, giving it just enough gasolene to keep it from being stalled. His hand was on the reverse lever, ready to throw in the clutch, and then to start the motor at full speed astern.

The *Dartaway* was merely under enough power to give her steerage way. Sam, by a nod of his head, indicated to Jerry to approach the whale broadside on, as they were now coming up to the monster's tail. One blow from the mighty flukes, and there would be no boat left.

Nearer and nearer to the creature the *Dartaway* was sent. Now it was within one hundred feet. Now it was seventy-five. Still the whale had not taken fright. The boys could hardly

breathe from the fierce beating of their hearts.

As for Sam, he was as cool as though he was about to pull in a small fish which he had hooked. He stood rigid in the bow, the terrible harpoon poised over his shoulder.

Suddenly his arm shot forward. There was a whistling sound, a hissing through the air. Something flew from the boat, and struck the whale.

The next instant the boys saw, sticking up from the whale's back, a straight shaft. It was the handle of the harpoon. The iron had entered deep into the flesh.

"Hard astern!" yelled Sam. "Astern for your lives!"

Jerry never moved more quickly than he did to throw the reverse gear in, and send the gasolene and sparking levers over. With a splutter and roar the motor got into action, and the *Dartaway* began to back.

And only just in time, for the whale fairly leaped out of the water from the pain of the iron. Then it brought its great flukes down on the surface, sending up a shower of spray that soaked the occupants of the boat.

The line began to run from the tub and over an improvised roller Sam had fastened in the bow.

So rapidly did it spin out that the bearings began to smoke, and the old sailor dipped up water in a tin can and began pouring it over the wood, to prevent it from catching fire.

"Struck good and deep!" he cried. "Old Sam is some good yet."

The engine was still running on the reverse, but, in a few minutes the boys noticed that they were going forward.

"What's the matter?" asked Ned.

At that the last of the line was out of the tub, but before then it had been quickly caught around a cleat, by Sam.

"We're being towed out to sea," the old sailor said. "Don't be afraid. It's what I expected."

CHAPTER X

THE WHALE ESCAPES

"TOWED out to sea?" inquired Ned.

The words had a sort of terror in them. The boys looked at one another.

"Land love you, yes," went on the old whaler, who seemed as happy as a lad at a picnic. "It isn't the first time I've been towed by a whale. That's the way they do, sometimes. But they soon tire of it, and then we'll have another chance at him."

"But isn't it dangerous?" asked Jerry, who did not exactly like the idea.

"Not a bit," replied Sam. "That is, if you cut the line in time, in case the whale sounds."

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"Why, sometimes they'll take a notion to go down before you know it. Then, if you don't cut the line in time, they're liable to swamp the boat."

"Maybe we'd better cut it now," suggested Bob.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Sam. "Why it's only just begun. There's no danger yet. I remember

once we was towed nearly a day with a whale in the North Sea. I was mate of the *Dogstar* then, as fine a craft as I ever saw. But she was wrecked on an iceberg and I was the only one saved. That was a voyage!" and the old man's eye sparkled in remembrance.

"How far will he take us?" asked Jerry, not a little anxious on his mother's account.

"No telling," replied Sam. "Twenty or thirty miles, maybe. But you have one advantage we didn't have in the old whale boats. You can keep the engine going at reverse, and make a drag that will soon tire him out. That's a good thing."

In spite of the fact that the motor was revolving the screw backward, the whale seemed to have no difficulty in pulling the *Dartaway* after him. He fairly made the craft fly through the water.

Right out to sea, the motor boat was headed. The beach had long since been left astern, and the other boats could only be dimly seen.

There was nothing to do but to sit and wait for the whale to tire itself out. Sam seemed to accept this as a matter of course. He had brought a lance along, in addition to his harpoon, and was now sharpening this keen weapon, in anticipation of making a death thrust.

As for the boys, they viewed with alarm the ever increasing distance from shore. The beach was now but an indistinct hazy line.

"Maybe we'd better give it up," suggested Bob.

"Why, are you getting hungry, Chunky?" asked Jerry.

Ned's laugh at this sally seemed to relieve their feelings somewhat, and, when Sam told them he would only hold on a little while longer, in case they were still alarmed, they felt better.

"We can't come to any harm," the old sailor said. "No matter how far we go we can get back, and we'll not have to row, either, the way we did in the old days."

"But it's a good distance to go to sea in a small boat," objected Bob.

"This is big enough to cross the Atlantic in," said the sailor. "All you want is plenty to eat."

"Oh, we've got that," Bob replied, brightening up, somewhat at the remembrance of the well filled lockers.

"Then don't worry," advised Salt Water Sam. "It's a fine day and no sign of a storm."

Then the boys decided to accept the situation. They knew they could make good time back, in their craft, and Jerry did not believe his mother would worry. Besides she had no idea that they

had gone whaling. If she had, she might have been alarmed.

Then, too, there was something fascinating in the idea of being attached to a monster of the deep. The boys realized it was an experience they might never have again, though, for that matter, it is doubtful if they ever wanted it.

So, for an hour longer they sat in the boat and watched the waves rushing past them. As the reversing of the engine seemed to have no slackening effect on the whale's progress, Jerry decided to shut the motor off, and so save gasolene.

Now and then Sam would stand up in the bow and take an observation. The boys could see nothing but the long, thin line extending from the craft and disappearing beneath the water.

"He's still there," said the old sailor, as if there could be any doubt of it with the way the boat was speeding through the water. "I can see him, almost on the surface. He's going a lively clip."

Bob got up from where he had been seated and began rummaging about in the locker.

"What's the matter?" asked Ned.

"I'm hungry," announced Chunky. "Got to have something to eat."

"That's not a bad idea," Sam put in. "I

didn't have much dinner myself, and salt air always makes me have an appetite."

Thus finding an ally, Bob proceeded to get out the victuals. He lighted the gasolene stove and made coffee, which with some sandwiches and canned stuff, provided a meal that made up in zest what it lacked in quality.

"I'll bet it's the first time this whale ever towed a dinner party," said Jerry between bites.

"I hope it'll be the last," murmured Sam. "I want to get my lance into him. There's a pot of money in it, even if he isn't a spermer. We can land him on the beach and charge ten cents admission to see him, though it's not in my line."

It was about ten minutes later when Jerry, glancing at the line, noticed it was slack. He called Sam's attention to it.

"He's up to some trick," the old sailor remarked, as he peered anxiously forward. "Going to sound, or maybe he's headed this way."

The boys looked at each other. Here was a new complication. It was one thing to chase a whale. It was altogether another to have the process reversed and the monster turn pursuer.

"What shall we do?" asked Ned.

"We'll have to wait and see what he's up to," Sam replied.

"Suppose he comes for us?"

"Then we'll have to run. That's the only safe rule," and Sam smiled grimly.

The *Dartaway* was now rocking easily on the waves. The sea remained calm, and, as the sailor remarked, was like a "mill pond on a summer day." The line from the bow lay slack on the water.

"He's sulking," muttered Sam, as he stood up, trying to catch a glimpse of the monster.

An instant later it seemed as if a big wave was coming toward the boat. There was a roll of green water, advancing nearer and nearer.

"He's headed for us!" cried Sam. "Quick! Start the engine and get away!"

Bob dropped his sandwich and sprang to the fly wheel. He cranked it, praying silently that the explosion might come quickly.

Jerry had thrown the forward gear in, and turned on the gasolene and spark. There sounded a welcome "chug," and an instant later the engine was working at rapid speed.

Jerry put the wheel over, and headed the boat away from the on-coming whale. The line, fast to the bow, swung over the stern, lengthwise of the craft, nearly carrying Ned overboard in the rapid change it made.

The *Dartaway* was off like an arrow from the bow, piling up a line of foam at the cut-water. The big wave at the back was nearer now. It was caused by the water gathering in front of the whale's blunt, massive head.

"Can we get away?" cried Bob.

"We've got to try!" shouted Sam. "Put a little more speed on, skipper!"

The boat forged ahead faster than before. Sam stood up, peering aft to see if the whale gained. There was no doubt that the monster was nearer, in spite of the fast whirling propellor. For once the *Dartaway* had met her match in a speed contest.

"Can't you get any more out of her?" called the sailor in an anxious voice.

"No," said Jerry, his heart sinking.

"He'll ram us and sink us!" cried Bob.

"Veer off a bit!" yelled Sam. "Maybe he'll rush past us, and we can slip away."

Jerry shifted the wheel, to allow the whale to pass on the left, if it would, in its maddened rush. The sailor armed himself with a small hatchet and his lance.

As the boat swung around the line passed from the stern to the bow. It had been slack, but now

it grew taut again, and the old sailor, watching it, sought for an explanation.

It was easily found. The whale had ceased its rush at the boat, and, passing to one side, was moving forward again. Then, as though trying a last resort to rid itself of the harpoon, it suddenly sank. Down and down into the ocean depths it went.

The bow of the *Dartaway* began to be depressed. Lower and lower it went into the water, until the screw was revolving in the air.

"He'll pull us down with him!" yelled Jerry.

"No, he won't!" cried Sam.

There was a sharp sound, a snap as though a whip had cracked and the end of the line flew up in the air. Sam had cut it with his hatchet, and the whale had escaped its enemies. The bow of the boat righted, and the craft floated on an even keel, moving forward at a fast pace.

CHAPTER XI

ADRIFT ON THE OCEAN

"THAT'S the end of Mr. Whale," remarked Sam, in somewhat sorrowful tones, as he looked at the trailing end of the severed rope. "There goes the best line I ever had, and a harpoon I wouldn't have lost for a lot of money."

"Maybe the whale will die from the wound," said Jerry. "Anyway, he came near making an end of us."

"So he did," replied Sam, brightening up. "It was the only thing to do. Maybe I got the iron in deep enough, but I didn't see any blood and that's the way to tell."

"Shall we put back now?" asked Jerry.

"I s'pose we might as well. Can't do anything more here. Where's your compass? and I'll lay a course for you. It's getting so hazy, and we've twisted and turned so I can't tell where the beach is."

"Get out the compass, Bob," called Jerry.

"Compass? I haven't got the thing," Bob replied.

"Course you have. I gave it to you the other day, when we were fixing up the boat, and you told me you put it in the locker."

"I don't remember," Bob replied.

"I saw you have it," Ned said. "It was the new one, in a round metal case."

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Chunky. "Was that the compass! I thought it was a can of peas or something like that."

"Well, never mind what you thought it was, hand it over," Jerry said.

"Why, I didn't put it in the locker," Bob answered.

"You didn't put it in!" exclaimed Ned. "What in the world did you do with it?"

"Why, I thought we had enough canned peas on board, and I left it in the boathouse until our supply would run low. It's there now, on a shelf. I thought it was something to eat."

"Well, you are the limit, Chunky!" exclaimed Jerry. "I always knew your eating habits would make trouble and now they have, sure enough."

"I couldn't help it," Bob said trying to think of some defense. "Why didn't you tell me it wasn't anything to eat?"

"Hereafter I'll label everything I hand you,"

spoke Jerry sarcastically. "You're not safe aboard a boat!"

"No compass, eh?" questioned the old sailor. "Well, maybe one of you have one for a watch charm, that would answer?"

But none of the boys had. The old sailor cast his eye toward the clouds, that were beginning to gather, and looked across the waste of waters. The haze was thickening.

"Are we in any danger?" asked Bob, his voice showing how anxious he felt.

"Well, not right away," replied Sam. "Still it's going to be a risk to go in any direction. We may hit the shore and we may not. We may go farther out to sea than would be safe, and we might run up on the rocks. It's a ticklish position to be in. I remember one like it when I was second mate on the *Rolling Porpoise*. We were cruising around three days, without a drop to drink or anything to eat, before we found the ship that was hidden by the fog."

"We've got plenty to eat and lots of water to drink," said Bob. "That's one comfort."

"And a mighty good one it is, when you're lost at sea," put in Sam.

"You wouldn't call us lost, would you?" asked Ned.

"I don't know what else it is," the sailor replied. "We don't know which way to go, and that's as near lost as I want to be."

"It's your fault, Bob," said Jerry.

"Needn't rub it in, though," came from Chunky, in aggrieved tones.

"We'll do the best we can," spoke Sam. "You trust to me and I'll bring you out of this if possible."

But, though Sam made light of the plight they were in, it was not one to be easily passed over. The party was in a good boat, a craft that had been tried on the open sea, and which had proven its stability. The *Dartaway* was indeed a craft of which to be proud. But the boys were farther out on the deep than they had been during the squall. Though it was now calm, there was no telling how long it would remain so, and the increasing haze seemed to promise a spell of bad weather.

"Let's make everything snug," suggested Sam. "That's the first thing to do. How about lights? We'll have to show 'em after dark, to avoid being run down."

"We have them," said Jerry. "Why, are we in any danger of collision?"

"Well, we're not exactly in the path of steam-

ers that go up and down the coast," the sailor replied, "but there's no telling when one will come along. Best to prepare for 'em."

Under his direction the boys made fast all loose gear. Jerry looked to the engine, found there was plenty of gasolene in the tank, and saw that the awning posts were well secured. The covering was up, but the side curtains had not yet been let down. Then the red and green lights were set aglow, as, though it would not be dark for some time, Sam said they ought to do as much as possible by daylight. There was no carbide for the search light, but they did not think they would need it.

It was almost dark when all their preparations had been completed, and Sam took a long look around to see if he could, through the haze, make out anything that would serve for a mark to steer by. But it was impossible.

"Maybe I can get a glimpse of the stars," he said. "Once I get my eye on the dipper I'm all right."

"I thought it was the north star that sailors steered by," spoke Ned.

"So it is, son, but there are two stars in the bowl of the dipper, called the pointers, that are

right in line with the north star. Get your eye on them pointers, and you can tell where the north star is easier than if you don't see the big ladle," and Sam began tightening anew some ropes which did not just suit him.

But even the stars were blotted out by the curtain of mist and Sam's hopes were blighted. However, he made the best of it.

"I'll risk it by the wind," he said.

"How's that?" asked Jerry.

"It's generally blowing off shore at this time of night. If we keep the breeze in our faces we may strike the beach."

Accordingly the *Dartaway* was headed into the teeth of the wind, and the engine regulated to moderate speed. Through the darkness the craft sped over the waters. It was now night, and though the boys tried not to show their nervousness, they did not succeed very well.

It was one thing to be out in their boat all night on a lake or river. They knew in a case like that they were in no immediate danger. But out on the ocean after dark, in a small craft, and not knowing their position, was a more serious proposition. Besides, there seemed to be something "scary" in the mere thought of the vast-

ness of the sea, the great depths, the monsters that inhabitated it, and the great waves that the wind could raise in a short time.

"Let's put down the curtains," suggested the sailor. "We want all the shelter we can get, for it will be chilly by morning."

"Do you think we'll be out here all night?" asked Ned.

"Likely to. We came a good ways behind Mr. Whale, and we haven't gone back very far."

With the curtains down, and a couple of lanterns lighted inside, the *Dartaway's* interior was a cosy enough place. Bob insisted on getting another meal, in spite of the fact that one had been served not so long ago.

"That wasn't a regular supper," he declared. "This is," and he started the gasolene stove.

"We must set a watch," said Sam. "Have to take turns steering. There are four of us, and we'd better make it in two shifts. Jerry and I will take the first one."

Ned and Bob declared they didn't feel like taking the time to sleep before their watch was called, as the novelty of the night at sea was too much for them. So they reclined on the bunks, talk-

ing, while Sam went to the wheel, and Jerry looked after the engine.

A little wind had sprung up and the sea was heaving more than at any time since the strange cruise began. Still the *Dartaway* was not in trouble. She slid over the waves like a duck, and made good time, though it was guess work steering her.

They had been cruising in the teeth of the wind for about an hour, and Ned and Bob were beginning to get a little sleep, in spite of their desire to remain awake, when there came a curious sound from the engine.

It was a combined cough, wheeze and squeak, and Jerry who had been leaning back, jumped up to look at the motor. As he did so it came to a stop.

"What's the trouble?" called Sam, from the wheel.

"Motor's stuck, that's all. I'll fix it," Jerry replied.

CHAPTER XII

ALMOST RUN DOWN

WITH vigorous motions Jerry sent the fly-wheel spinning around. It went fast enough, but there was no answering chug-chug. He adjusted the spark and gasolene levers a few notches forward and tried again, but without results.

"Maybe the gasolene is out," suggested Bob.

"There was plenty a while ago," answered Jerry.

Still, he was aware that sometimes a tank will spring a leak most unexpectedly. He tried the reservoir, and found there was enough of the liquid to last a long time. He was sure then the trouble must be in the motor.

In quick succession Jerry tried all the means known to him of locating the difficulty. He knew it must be something slight, as there was good compression. Then he tried the batteries and they gave a "fat" green spark. Clearly there was electricity enough.

"I say," called back Sam, "got to do some-

thing pretty soon. We're losing steerage way, and we'll be in the trough in a few minutes."

With Ned and Bob to help and offer suggestions, Jerry went all over the engine to locate the trouble. It might be in one of a dozen places, for a gasolene motor is a delicate machine and can get more kinds of things the matter with it than can a baby.

"How about the carburettor?" asked Bob, referring to the apparatus where the gasolene is mixed with air so it will explode in the cylinders.

"I don't want to monkey with that," Jerry replied. "It never has given any trouble, and I'm afraid to take it apart now."

Just then the *Dartaway* gave a violent lurch to one side, and the boys, who were stooping down, were nearly thrown off their balance.

"Did we hit something?" called Jerry.

"No, a wave hit us," Sam replied. "Can't you get the engine fixed?"

"Doesn't seem so."

"Then I've got to do something. She won't answer the rudder any more, and is getting down in the hollows."

"What can you do?"

"I'll show you. I haven't been to sea forty years for nothing, sonny. I'll do the same thing I

did when I was shipwrecked in the Indian Ocean once, and had to live three days on a raft."

Sam did not waste any more time in words. He came from the bow, since it was no longer any use to try to steer the *Dartaway,* and made his way astern. With him he brought the tub in which the whale line had been coiled.

"The boat isn't leaking," said Bob, thinking the sailor was about to begin bailing operations.

"I know it, you just watch me."

Sam fastened a piece of rope to each of the two handles of the tub. These strands he tied together, and at the place of joining he attached another rope.

Seeing that all of the knots were secure he climbed out on the overhanging stern of the boat, and made the end of the long rope fast to a cleat. Then he dropped the tub overboard, and it fell with a splash into the water.

"He's lost it!" cried Bob.

"Not a bit of it," Sam said. "That's what I wanted to do. That's what we call a drag, sonny. It will keep the boat head on to the waves, and that's the most important thing now."

In the meanwhile the craft had been pitching and rolling about in rather an alarming fashion. The boys had all they could do to stand upright,

but Sam crawled and walked about like the old salt that he was.

No sooner had the tub been dropped astern than an improvement was apparent. The rolling and pitching ceased, and, though it was still rough riding compared to being on a lake or river, the *Dartaway* stood up well, and was on a more even keel.

"That drag has something of the same effect as if we were moving by means of the engine," explained Sam. "It keeps the stern in the right place. The wind on the awning gives us a little headway and I think we'll do very well for a while. Lucky the whale didn't take the tub with him."

Now that they were temporarily in a little better shape, Jerry renewed his efforts to get the engine to work. It was anything but an easy task at best. Even in daylight and on still water he had often found his ingenuity taxed to the utmost to discover some slight defect and remedy it. Now, in a boat that had an uneven motion, and amid a darkness that the lights seemed to but increase, it was about as ticklish a proposition as the youth had ever undertaken.

"I'll go for'ard," spoke the sailor. "I can't do anything here, and I'll be on the lookout."

The boys tried everything they could bring to mind. They had been in similar trouble before, though not under such serious circumstances.

"I think after all I'll have to take the carburettor out," Jerry remarked with something like a sigh, for it was a hard and difficult task.

"I say!" called Sam. "Do you suppose any of the pipes is stopped up?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, we had some trouble once, when I was aboard the *Double Dog Fish,* and it was on account of stopped-up pipes."

"Was that a motor boat?" asked Bob.

"Say, that was before we ever thought of motor boats. It was away back in 1849. It was this way. There was a barrel of molasses aboard, and we used to be allowed to help ourselves. It come in mighty good for sweetening your tea. Well, one day we opened the spigot and none come out. First we thought the cook had shut down on us. Then we thought maybe the molasses had given out. But it wasn't either one."

"What was it?" asked Jerry, glad of something to take his mind off the trouble of the engine.

"Why the spigot was stopped up. One of the

sailors had dropped his ball of rope yarn, with which he was mending sails, into the barrel one day, and there it was inside plumb up against the spigot."

"How'd you get it out?" asked Ned.

"I run my hand down in the barrel, rolling up my sleeve of course, and got the ball out. Then the molasses run just the same as before. There was some kicking though, account of me licking the molasses off my arm. The men claimed I got more than my share."

In spite of their anxiety the boys could not help laughing at the sailor's story.

"I thought maybe some pipe or other got stopped up, and the molasses or whatever it is you run that engine with, might not be flowing."

"I never thought of that," Jerry said. "Wait until I take a look."

"How can you look in the gasolene tank?" came from Bob.

"Well then, feel, if it suits you better."

Jerry moved forward and was about to remove the cover from the tank, when a cry from Sam stopped him.

"Here comes a big steamer!" the sailor yelled. It's bearing right down on us, and we can't move out of her course!"

"Blow the whistle!" cried Ned.

Instinctively Jerry pulled the cord. He forgot the engine was not working, and that there was no compressed air to send out a blast. In the midst of his terror, he resolved to have a storage tank installed for air for the whistle if ever they came safely out of their trouble.

"Ship ahoy!" yelled Sam, with lungs that had done their duty in all sorts of weather. "On board the steamer!"

The sailor and Jerry peering between the curtains at the bow, and Ned and Bob, looking forth from the side awnings, saw a big vessel bearing right down on them. They could distinguish the towering bow and the twinkling lights.

"Ship ahoy! You'll run us down!" hailed Sam.

The boys joined their voices to his, and a chorus of shouts went up. But the wind had freshened and was blowing quite strongly. Even had the the night been still it is doubtful if the pilot could have heard, shut up in the bridge house.

As for the lookout aloft, he was too far up, and the wind, doubtless, made such a noise through the rigging that it would have taken a megaphone to have aroused him.

"Veer off! Veer off!" shouted the sailor.

"Can't they see our lights!" cried Jerry. "Oh, if only the search light was going!"

"We're too low down, lad. I'm afraid we're done for. If we could only forge ahead a bit! If the engine was only running!"

It seemed there was no escape. Nearer and nearer came the big ship. It seemed like a monster about to crush the little boat in its path. Once it struck it there would be nothing left of the *Dartaway,* and the shock to the steamer would be so slight those on board would never notice it.

"If I only had a horn, or something to make a louder noise with!" said Sam, with something like a groan.

"A noise!" almost yelled Bob. "Quick, Jerry! The cannon!"

Jerry made a jump for the brass ordnance. He seized the string. There was a charge in the cannon, put there the day after the races. The boy yanked the lanyard.

Bang!

An explosion roared through the night and echoed over the dark waters.

CHAPTER XIII

NODDY NIXON TURNS UP

WOULD those on the steamer hear it? Would they change the course in time? Could they, at the rate the ship was going?

These were questions which surged through the minds of those on the *Dartaway*. How anxiously they waited to see how they would be answered!

"If she hits us jump for your lives!" cried Sam, climbing through the awning curtains out on the gunwale. "It's the only chance we've got!"

But there was some excitement on the steamer. Lights flashed out on the bow. Then a big glaring beam from a search lantern cut through the gloom. There were confused shouts, a jingle of bells. Evidently the cannon had been heard.

"She's veering off! She's veering off!" yelled the sailor. "Look out for the wash as she passes us!"

Indeed, the great steamer could be seen to be changing her course. The immense bow seemed to glide away from the motor boat. As the

boys held their breaths the vessel loomed up almost in front of them, but safely away. They had just escaped being run down.

With inquiring toots from her big whistles the steamer surged past the *Dartaway*. As she glided by the boys could see, leaning over the rail, a group of men. Doubtless they wondered what venturesome mariners these were, out so far at sea in a little craft.

"Hold hard!" cried Sam.

He spoke only just in time, for the *Dartaway* began to rock violently from the wash of the steamer's propellors. The boys clung to the awning stantions or they might have been flung overboard.

Then, as the steamer, in her changed course, showed her stern lights to those on the motor boat, there came a feeling of thanksgiving at their providential escape from almost certain death.

"Lucky you had that cannon!" commented Sam. "It was better than a horn or whistle."

For a few minutes the boys could not reply, they were so unnerved. But the old sailor seemed to take it as a matter of course.

"It isn't the first time I've been nearly cut in two by a steamer," he said. "That often happens on the fishing banks."

Jerry made his way back to the cockpit and sat

down on a bunk. He was trembling from the excitement.

"Brace up!" spoke Sam, noticing the boy's condition. "Have another try at the engine. See if the pipe is stopped up."

That put Jerry's mind on another subject, and relieved him of the strain he was under. He waited until the commotion of the water had somewhat subsided, and then went forward again to the gasolene tank.

Baring his arm to the shoulder, and lying flat out on the bow, in order to get to the bottom of the receptacle, he felt around in it. For a few moments there was an anxious wait. Then he cried:

"I've got it!"

He pulled out a bunch of cotton waste, used to clean the engine with. How it got in the tank was a mystery, but it had effectually stopped the flow of gasolene.

"Now for another try!" exclaimed Bob. "I'll bet the *Dartaway* will prove equal to her name."

Anxiously the boys went back to the engine. The fly wheel was spun around. This time there was an answering chug-chug, and, a moment later the motor was humming away in a fashion that thrilled the hearts of all.

"We're off!" shouted Bob.

"Wait until I get my tub!" exclaimed Sam. "It's all I've got left of my outfit."

He scrambled aft, and hauled aboard the improvised drag. Then Jerry threw in the clutch and the *Dartaway* shot ahead.

"Which way shall I steer?" asked Jerry, who had gone to the wheel.

"Well, we're as bad off as ever in that regard," the sailor replied. "Wait a minute though. That steamer was cutting right across our bows. We ought to keep straight on I guess, to fetch up on the coast, as the vessel was going down along it. I think I know where we are."

For a few minutes the boat went along, riding more evenly, now that it had better headway. Suddenly there flashed on it a glaring light. It was steady for a second, and then turned red. It flashed the ruby glow twice, and then disappeared.

"What was that?" cried Bob.

"The lighthouse!" exclaimed Ned.

"Sure enough," came from Sam. "It's all right. I know where I am now. Better let me take the wheel."

With the sureness of one who knows his way, even in the darkest night, the old sailor turned the craft into the proper channel. Forward it went.

like a frightened hare scudding back to the shelter of the burrow.

"Rocky Point Light; — the South Light," murmured Salt Water Sam. "I'm right at home now. We must have been behind the upper headland or we'd seen it before. It's all right. We're on our way back."

So it proved. Through the darkness, illuminated only by the red and green side lamps, the *Dartaway* sped, steered by a sure hand. On and on she went toward the harbor.

The boys did not learn until afterward that they had been towed nearly twenty miles by the whale. Had the weather not remained calm they would have been in dire peril, but fortune favored them, even in the matter of escaping from the steamer. Had they been taken straight out to sea they would have had more trouble, but the big monster, in his blind rage, had taken a diagonal course up the coast.

"My, but I am sleepy," remarked Jerry, stretching himself.

"So am I," added Ned.

"You boys better take a nap," Sam said. "I'll call you about eight bells and take forty winks myself. We'll get in about daylight." And then he began to sing:

"Oh it's Ho! for a sailor's life for me;
When stormy winds do blow!
And waves run high;
Up to the sky;
With mermaids down below!"

"You're quite a poet," said Jerry.

"I didn't make that up," replied the sailor. "It was a feller with two eyes. I was mate and he was second mate on the *Tumbling Turtle.*"

The boys felt tired enough to take Sam's advice. They covered up with blankets on the bunks in the little cabin, and, in spite of the excitement of the day and night, dozed off.

It was daylight when Sam awoke them, and they were just entering the harbor of Harmon Beach.

"I thought you were going to call us at eight bells," said Bob.

"Four o'clock in the morning's no time for boys to be getting up," said Sam. "I hated to disturb you. I'm used to staying up."

"I must hurry up and let mother know we're all right," said Jerry as the boat swung up to the dock. "She'll be worried."

The boys found a crowd awaiting their return, though it was but seven o'clock. The rumor of their disappearance in the hunt for the whale had spread all through the summer colony.

"Salt Water Sam was along," the sailor remarked proudly to some of the questioners. "We knew what we were about." He did not mention how near they had come to being run down.

"Did you get the whale?" asked a man of the sailor, as the boys hurried ashore and ran to the Hopkins cottage.

"We did and we didn't," replied the old salt.

"Well, you killed him, anyway."

"What's that?"

"He came ashore, dead, down the beach, a little while ago."

"Are you joking?"

"Not a bit of it. Word to that effect just came."

"Whoop!" yelled Sam. "I'll get my old harpoon back. I must tell the boys. So I haven't forgot how to throw the iron! Whoop! Shiver my timbers! I've killed my last whale! Hold me down, somebody!"

Salt Water Sam was dancing about in great excitement.

"Where's the whale?" he inquired.

"About three miles south, on the beach."

"I'm going right down and see it. I must get the boys. This'll be great news for them."

Sam made the boat fast to the dock and hurried to the cottage where the chums had gone. They had just succeeded in telling Mrs. Hopkins all about their trip. She had been somewhat worried, but she felt that Jerry and his companions could take care of themselves. They had been away too many nights before, and had gone through too many adventures, for her to do much worrying, unless she had good cause.

"Good news, boys!" cried Sam, coming in unannounced.

"What is it?"

"'We've got our whale! Come on!" He rapidly explained.

Mrs. Hopkins wanted them to at least stay for breakfast, but they would not hear of it.

"I'm going to lay claim to the creature," the sailor exclaimed. "It has my harpoon in it. That proves property. Can't lose any time."

The boys hurried back to the dock and got into the boat, and started down the coast. As they neared a little cove, on which was located another summer colony, they could see a big crowd collected.

"That's where it is," Sam remarked. "Put in there."

When they landed they saw a big shapeless body stranded on the beach. It resembled an immense log of black wood.

"There's my whale!" cried Sam, proudly.

The creature looked vastly different from the monster that had towed the boys in their boat out to sea. They went closer to the crowd, which surrounded the bulk of flesh and bone. As they made their way through the fringe of people they heard some one saying:

"Now you've all got to get away. This is my whale. I discovered it. I'm going to put a tent over it and charge twenty-five cents admission. Stand back, I say!"

Something about the tones struck the boys as being familiar. They went closer.

"Here, no more can come here!" exclaimed a youth, who began shoving the motor boys back. "This is my whale."

There, confronting our three heroes, was Noddy Nixon.

CHAPTER XIV

A BATH HOUSE MYSTERY

FOR a few seconds it would have been hard to tell who was the more surprised, Noddy or the three boys. They stood confronting each other, while the crowd surged this way and that. Then Noddy spoke again:

"I want to know what you fellows mean, coming here trying to take my whale?" he asked.

"Your whale, Noddy Nixon?" inquired Jerry.

"Yes, my whale. Didn't I discover it ashore early this morning? I put a paper with my name on it. I claim it under the law."

Salt Water Sam thrust himself forward. His one eye gleamed with an angry light.

"Who's this young whipper-snapper that claims my whale?" he asked. "Let me get at him!"

"Don't you touch me!" cried Noddy, as the sailor confronted him. "I'll have you arrested if you put your hands on me; that's what I will!"

"I'll not touch you unless there's an occasion for it. How did you get this whale?"

"I was walking along the beach, and I saw it come in. I ran out and put my card on it. I got my feet wet, too, and I'm going to get paid for all my trouble. Now all you people get away. I'm going to have a tent put up, and charge admission."

The crowd gathered closer about the boys, the sailor, Noddy and the whale. The big creature lay in a little hollow scooped in the sand by the action of the waves. It had been stranded at high tide.

"If I thought you knew better I'd spank you, sonny," spoke Sam, in quiet but determined tones. "I guess you'd better run along home to your mother now."

This made Noddy furious. He drew back his hand as though to strike the sailor. The latter, however, only laughed. He thrust the angry youth to one side, and, striding to the whale, placed his hand on the harpoon handle and exclaimed:

"Friends, this is the whale I and the three boys here killed yesterday. We made fast to him, and he towed us quite a ways out, before we had to cut loose. My harpoon killed the whale and it's mine. There's my initials on the handle, and there's the notches to show how many other creatures my iron has gone into."

"What's all the trouble?" asked a tall, bronzed man, pushing his way into the crowd.

"Hello, Captain Trembly!" cried Sam, recognizing the master of a near-by life saving station. "Here's a whale of mine that's come ashore, and this young man lays claim to it because he saw it first."

"Nonsense!" spoke the captain. "It's your property, of course, Sam. Only I wouldn't advise you to let it stay here very long. This isn't good keeping weather for dead whales."

"Couple of days will do me," the sailor said with a laugh. "There, now, sonny," turning to Noddy. "Maybe you'll believe the captain."

Seeing that the game had gone against him, Noddy made his way out of the crowd without speaking. But the looks he cast at the sailor and the three chums were anything but kind.

"Wonder how he got here?" asked Jerry.

"Seems as if he followed us," spoke Ned.

They learned afterward that Noddy's father had, at his son's urging, taken a cottage at Glen Cove, the next summer resort on the coast below Harmon Beach.

"Now, friends," went on Sam to the crowd, "you're welcome to look at this whale as long as you like, until I get a tent over it. Then it'll be

ten cents to see it. Part of the money I'm going to give to the hospital here."

Sam's spirit, so different from Noddy's mean and selfish one, met with quick response on the part of the assemblage.

"We'll all come and see it when you've got it under a tent," one man called out, and there was a chorus of assents.

Sam got some sailor friends to help him, and with a couple of horses, hauled the whale higher up on the beach. Then he put a tent over the big creature and did a thriving business, exhibiting the monster. The three chums assisted him, and acted as lecturers to the curious, telling over and over again their part in the capture and harpooning.

As for the sailor, he was in his glory. He related the incidents of the chase with great minuteness, not omitting the one about the steamer. He even sold small slivers from the handle of his harpoon.

"Sure I can easy make another handle," he confided to the boys, "but it's not every day I can sell a bit of wood for twenty-five cents. I must make money while the whale lasts."

It only lasted three days, however, and the final one the patronage visibly fell off. Even the boys

did not seem very keen about going to the tent.

"If it was ambergris in that whale, it would be all right," Jerry remarked, as he held a perfumed handkerchief to his nose. "But it isn't and that's the fault of it."

The others agreed with him, and that night a gang of men dug a big hole in the beach and tumbled the whale into it. But Sam made a goodly sum, which he wanted to share with the boys. They would take none of his money, however, so the sailor made a liberal donation to charity.

"Seen anything more of Noddy?" asked Jerry of his chums one morning, when they were out in their boat, cruising about the harbor.

"No, and I don't want to," replied Bob. "Noddy wouldn't be so bad, if we could know when he's coming so as to avoid him, but combined with Bill Berry the two are the limit."

"That reminds me of something," put in Ned. "I heard Bill Berry had a job down here somewhere."

"How'd you hear it?" Jerry asked.

"Got a letter from Andy Rush. He said he was talking with old Pete Bumps, and Pete told him Bill had a job at some lighthouse along the coast. Andy said he thought it was in this neighborhood, and he went on to say that Pete wanted

us to try and get him a job also. Andy suggested perhaps Pete thought the work was as easy as the name suggested. Andy says he may come down for a week or so a little later."

"Queer Andy, with his rapid-fire talk," remarked Ned. "I'd like to see him. Wonder if it's true about Bill? He might be at the lighthouse we saw the other night."

"We'll have to find out," spoke Jerry. "Now let's talk about something pleasant. What do you say to running ashore and having a bath? There's a nice place just ahead."

The boys voted it would be a good plan, and the boat was steered for the beach, where there were a number of bathing pavilions. The *Dartaway* was made fast to a dock and soon the boys were putting on suits which they hired.

They remained in the water about an hour, enjoying the gentle surf, and floating lazily beyond the line of breakers.

"This is something like life," remarked Bob, as he let the waves carry him toward shore.

"Surprised you're satisfied without a sandwich while you're floating," came from Jerry.

With a rapid motion of his hand, Bob splashed a small wave into Jerry's face, causing him to cough and splutter.

"That's enough!" cried the joker. "I'll quit."

"Speaking of sandwiches reminds me it's nearly dinner time," remarked Ned. "I'm going ashore."

The others followed his example, and were soon in the booths, dressing. Jerry had nearly completed his toilet, when he heard quite a commotion in the compartment next to him. He knew it could not be caused by Ned or Bob, as they were farther down the line. Some one was pounding on the thin wooden walls and shouting:

"Help! Help! I've been robbed!"

"What is it?" cried Jerry.

"Some one has taken my diamond ring!" was the reply, and, as Jerry peered from the door of his room, he saw a man, partly dressed, rush from the one next him, crying at the top of his voice:

"I've been robbed! I've been robbed!"

CHAPTER XV

LOOKING FOR BILL

JERRY turned toward the rear wall of his compartment to get his necktie, which was hanging on a nail. As he did so he happened to glance out of the crescent shaped ventilating opening at the rear and saw a man running over the sand, looking back every now and then.

Something about the figure seemed strangely familiar to Jerry, though as he could not get a front view, he was puzzled for a moment.

"I know him! It's Bill Berry!" he exclaimed.

Without pausing to adjust his collar and tie, Jerry ran out. He was joined by his chums, and several men who had been alarmed by the cries.

"What is it?" asked half a dozen.

"I've been robbed! My diamond ring, worth five hundred dollars, is missing!" shouted the half-dressed man.

"Where did you leave it?" asked an attendant.

"I hid it in my shoe."

"You should have left it at the office. The

management can not be responsible for jewelry taken from the bath houses."

"They can't, eh? Well, we'll see about that!" spluttered the excited man. "I've been robbed and some one has got to settle with me for it."

Jerry came close to the man who was raising such a disturbance and gave a start.

"Why, Professor Snodgrass!" he ejaculated. "Is it really you?"

"Jerry Hopkins!" cried the man and shook hands. "I am delighted to meet you!" And Uriah Snodgrass beamed on the boy. "How came you here? Do you think I can find any valuable bugs or butterflies in this neighborhood?"

"Don't know about butterflies and bugs," answered Jerry, with a grin, for he well remembered the failings of the old collector, who had accompanied the motor boys on their trip to Mexico and across the plains. "But what is this about your diamond ring?"

"Somebody has stolen it. And what is more, they have taken something even more valuable — a case full of choice specimens of mosquitoes!" And Uriah Snodgrass shook his head in despair.

"Mosquitoes!" snorted an attendant, in disgust.

"Ah! a rare collection, worth a thousand dollars or more!"

"I wouldn't give you ten cents for a bushel of mosquitoes."

"Well, I want them back — and I want my diamond ring," said the professor.

"How did it happen?" asked Jerry.

"I don't know exactly. I had been in the water about an hour. When I came out I dressed, and when I came to put my shoes on, before I put on my coat, vest and collar, I happened to think I had left my ring in the toe of my left shoe. I looked for it, and it was gone."

"Was your door forced?"

"Didn't appear to be."

"Let's have a look at your room," suggested the attendant, and he led the way to it, followed by a throng.

There was no evidence that the door had been tampered with. The lock was not sprung, and there were no marks on the jamb, which would have been the case had the door been forced open with a jimmy.

While Uriah Snodgrass, the attendant, and those gathered out of curiosity were standing outside the bath house, Jerry went inside. As he

stepped on the floor he noticed that one of the boards was loose. He stooped down, and found he could lift the plank up.

"There's how the thief got in!" he exclaimed. "See there is a space beneath the floor, and a man could crawl under from in back."

"That's so, these houses set on piles driven into the sand," the attendant stated. "There's a space of about two feet between the floor and the beach."

"Then I'll sue the management!" declared the professor. "The idea of leaving things so a burglar could push up a board, reach his hand in, and take whatever he wanted!"

"You should have left your ring at the office," insisted the man who looked after the pavilions. "What sort of a ring was it?"

"It was a big diamond set in the head of a snake with two rubies for eyes," Professor Snodgrass replied. "It's all right enough to talk about leaving it at the office. Lock the stable door after the horse is stolen is a good motto, also, but it doesn't give me back my ring. I'll sue some one."

While the professor was muttering to himself, and finishing dressing, Jerry motioned to his

chums who had come up to speak to Uriah Snodgrass, to follow him. He led them a safe distance away and said:

"Guess who I saw."

"Noddy Nixon!" exclaimed Ned.

"Bill Berry," replied Jerry, and he told what he had observed.

"What do you suppose he was running away for?" asked Bob. "Are you sure it was Bill?"

"Positive. As to what he was doing I believe he stole that ring."

"Let's go tell the professor," suggested Bob.

"It wouldn't do any good," came from Jerry. "We haven't any proof, and we might get unpleasantly mixed up in the thing."

"What would you suggest?"

"What do you say to trying to locate Bill?" Jerry went on. "If he's working at a lighthouse near here we can easily find him. There are not so many. There's one up the coast about five miles, and one down from here, about the same distance. We can take a couple of days at it cruising around, and combine business with pleasure, though it's not very nice business hunting for Bill. What do you say?"

"Fine!" exclaimed Ned.

"It will be a regular picnic!" from Bob.

"Oh, of course it will if Chunky goes along," put in Ned. "Always thinking of something to eat. Don't take the compass for a can of peas next time!"

Bob aimed a blow at his tormentor, but Ned cleverly dodged it.

"Let him alone," suggested Jerry. "He was punished enough. Well, if you're agreed, let's get ready to make the trip. We can start to-morrow."

The boys talked the robbery over with Uriah Snodgrass in a general way but did not mention Bill Berry, not wishing to excite the professor too much. They learned that their old friend was only down to the shore for the day and must go back to the city to deliver a lecture at eight o'clock that evening.

"I shall sue somebody," said Uriah Snodgrass," if I don't get my ring and my box of mosquitoes back."

"Perhaps they will turn up some day," answered Bob; and then the motor boys and Uriah Snodgrass separated.

The boys spent the afternoon cleaning the engine and getting the boat in shape for the proposed

trip. They made sure they had a compass along this time, and Bob was only allowed to supervise what was strictly eatable.

"Shall we try the upper or the lower lighthouse?" asked Jerry.

"The upper one," suggested Bob. "We've seen the lower one, at least the light of it from a distance, but never the upper."

So it was arranged. Early the next morning the boys were at the dock. As they unlocked the boathouse they heard a voice singing, as the owner trudged along the beach:

> "It was on the isle of Nankum,
> Near the land of Timbuctoo
> That poor old Sam fell overboard one night.
> There was a great commotion
> In the middle of the ocean,
> Sure he gave the sharks and whales
> a terrible fright."

"Salt Water Sam!" exclaimed Ned.

"Avast and belay my hearties!" shouted the sailor, who was nothing if not good natured. "Whither away this bright, beautiful morning?"

"Up the coast," replied Jerry. "We're going to take a look at the other lighthouse."

"Just the thing!" cried Sam. "I know lighthouses like I do the sea. It's part of my

business. I'll go along, and we'll combine business with pleasure."

"How's that, by catching another whale and exhibiting it?" asked Bob.

"It'll be sharks this time," the sailor went on. "Wait till I get my tackle and I'll be with you."

"He doesn't wait to be asked," commented Jerry with a laugh.

"Oh, let him come along," put in Ned. "He's good fun, and he helped us a lot. Besides, he may know the lighthouse keeper."

"And it will be sport to fish for sharks," added Bob.

"Oh I'm willing," came from Jerry.

Sam soon returned from the shack where he lived with two good sized hooks, some short lengths of chain, and a coil of thin rope. He also carried some salt pork in a paper.

"If we land a couple of big ones we can take in almost as much as we did on the whale," he added. "Course the sharks around here aren't the great big fellows, but eight feet is no slouch of a fish, and I've seen plenty that size."

They started off, sailing across the harbor toward the mouth, and, passing through the narrow strait, laid their course up the coast. The sea was calm, and the day a fine one for a sail.

"How do you fish for sharks?" asked Bob.

"Just bait the hook and throw it overboard," replied Sam. "But we'll wait until we're on our way back. Don't want to tow a shark up to the lighthouse."

About two hours' run brought the boat in sight of the upper point, on which the warning beacon was built. It stood in bold relief against the sky, a tall white object, like a big round chimney.

"Will they let us go in it?" asked Bob.

"Sure, I know the keeper," replied Sam. "He's an old friend of mine."

There was a little dock near the foot of the lighthouse and to this the boat was made fast. As the boys scrambled up the rocks that led to a little level plateau on which the house was built, they kept their eyes open for a sight of Bill Berry.

The only person they saw, however, was a little girl. She had light flaxen hair which streamed all about her head in the stiff wind that was blowing.

"Hello lassie; is your papa in?" asked Sam.

"Yes, sir, he's filling the lamps."

"Tell him Robinson Crusoe and his three men, Friday, Saturday and Sunday would like to see him."

"Are you really and truly Robinson Crusoe?" demanded the child, her eyes big with wonder.

"Well I was shipwrecked often enough to be," was Sam's answer, as he smiled. "Jack Stilkins will know who's here when he gets that message," he added, and the little girl went into the lower part of the lighthouse.

CHAPTER XVI

LANDING A SHARK

"HELLO, Sam! Up to some of your jokes again, eh?" asked a hearty voice, and a short, stout man, with blue eyes, which contrasted strangely with the bronze of his face, came from the tower. "I knew it must be you, when the lassie came in, all excited, at having seen Robinson. How are you? Where you going? Who are the lads with you? How've you been?"

"I'll give you my log book and let you take a look at it if that's the way you're going to go at me," answered Sam. "The fact of the matter is the boys, here, want to see a lighthouse. They're landlubbers, you know."

There was no use of resenting the way in which Sam spoke. He meant no offense, and the boys, realizing his character, took none.

"Landlubbers, eh?" commented Mr. Stilkins. "Well, it's too bad, but I s'pose it's not their fault."

"No," replied Sam gravely, as though it was a

very important matter. "They was born so," and then the two men had a hearty laugh, in which the boys joined.

"Well, I can show you the lighthouse, but there isn't much to see," the keeper went on. "We just keep the light going at night. That's all there is to it. This is a flashing light. That is, it shows two red flashes at intervals of ten seconds each."

"The one below has a white flash and two red ones," commented Jerry.

"Yes, that's the difference, and it's a big one for sailors. You see it's safe to come in right close to shore here. In fact that's the only channel. If they stand too far out they'll fetch up on the rocks or a sand bar. But they've got to do just the opposite in regard to the other light. They must keep at least two miles out, or they'll get spitted on the rocks. So you see when they observe two red flashes only they know it's time to stand in, and when they see a white flash and two red ones, it's time to stay out. Easy, when you once know how; eh, Sam," and the keeper clapped the sailor on the shoulder.

"That's what, messmate. Can you show the boys the machinery?"

The three chums were much interested in the

mechanism that revolved the lenses of the light, at the top of the tower.

"Do you have any help?" asked Jerry, thinking of the object of their trip.

"Oh, yes, I've got a man who shares the trick with me."

"Same one you had?" asked Sam, saving Jerry the trouble of putting a question.

"No, this is a new feller came the other day."

Jerry hardly looked at the other boys. He felt he was on the right track.

"Who is he?" Sam went on.

"Name's Bill — Bill — pshaw! I've clean forgotten it."

Jerry felt the keeper must notice his confusion.

"There he is now," went on Mr. Stilkins, pointing to a man coming toward the lighthouse. Jerry and his chums turned expecting to see Bill Berry confronting them. The shock, when they saw that the keeper's assistant was a little fat man, about as broad as he was tall, and crosseyed; (as different as possible from Bill Berry), almost made Jerry gasp.

"Hi, Bill!" called the keeper. "What's your last name?"

"Smith," was the answer.

"Must have been a terrible strain on your mind

to remember that," commented Sam. "Well, have you boys seen enough?"

The chums felt that they had, considering that the man they sought was not at this lighthouse. They silently made up their minds they would have to try the next one.

As the little party boarded the *Dartaway* the keeper called them an invitation to come and see him at any time. He promised to show them the light when it was in operation, and the boys resolved to take advantage of the offer.

"Now for a little try at the sharks," spoke Sam, as the boat got underway and swung out into the channel. "I think we'll stand out a bit."

"We might run on the rocks, they're out a ways," said Bob.

"Not with what this craft draws," replied the sailor. "You haven't got over three feet, and the rocks are a fathom below the surface at low tide."

Sam prepared his shark lines. He had two of them, each one with six feet of chain nearest the hook, for the big fish would bite through the hempen strands in an instant. The hooks were of good size, and Sam baited each one with a bit of the fat salt pork. Then he fastened the lines to the stern of the boat, and taking up his position

where he could feel to see if there was a bite, he tossed the bait overboard.

"Send her slow and easy," he said to Ned, who was at the wheel. "We'll soon be on their feeding ground."

With the motor running on first speed the boat, which had been put some distance out from shore, went down along the coast. It was a calm day, and so clear that objects could be seen for a long distance.

"Well," remarked Jerry in a low voice to his two chums, who were in the bow, "we didn't land him that time."

"Got to try the next lighthouse," said Bob. "What are we going to do when we find Bill?"

That was a phase of the question that had not occurred to any of them up to this point.

"Make him give up the ring," suggested Ned.

"We'd better go slow, where Bill Berry is concerned," Bob said. "I think it would be better to tell the professor what we know."

"Let's find Bill first," counseled Jerry. "Be careful not to let any one know we're looking for him."

Sam, who had been sitting quietly in the stern, with his hands resting lightly on the lines, suddenly jumped up and began pulling on one.

"Did you hook him?" cried Bob.

"He got away," the sailor said in a disgusted tone. "He was only nibbling at the bait. But we're amongst 'em now. Be on the watch."

Jerry and Bob went back to join Sam, while Ned stayed to run the engine and steer. But the first bite was not at once followed by any others. The boat went along for a mile or more before Sam gave any evidence of feeling the hooks touched. Then he uttered a yell:

"I've got one now!"

He began to haul in on the line, calling to the two boys to help him. The lads yanked with all their strength, as did the sailor, but they had met their match. Something at the other end of the line was pulling against them, and they could not budge it.

"Speed up the boat a bit!" called Sam. "We'll tire him out and try again!"

Ned put the motor to second speed, and the craft churned through the water. Sam waited a few minutes and then tried the line again, the boys helping him.

"He's a little easier now," the sailor remarked. "That pulling on his jaw weakened him."

In fact they were able to get in some slack now. They pulled and pulled, until it seemed that they

must have gotten up enough line to reach to the bottom of the ocean. Still nothing showed. But there was always that dead weight at the end of the small cable.

"Look out for trouble when he gets near the surface," panted Sam. "Ned, can't you lash the wheel and come back here with the hatchet? We'll need you."

Ned fastened the wheel so as to keep the boat in a straight course, and, wondering what part he was going to play, picked up a long-handled hatchet Sam had brought along and went to the stern.

His chums and the sailor were still hauling on the line, their hands and arms aching from the strain. Foot after foot was pulled aboard until Sam exclaimed:

"We'll have him up in a few seconds!"

Hardly had he spoken when there was a commotion near the surface of the ocean, about ten feet from the stern of the boat. The water was lashed into foam, and in the midst of the swirling eddies could be seen the tip of a big tail, and the triangular shaped, dorsal fin of the shark.

"There he is!" yelled Sam. "He's a big one!"

It seemed as though they had hooked on to a

small whirlwind beneath the water, or a miniature torpedo that was in full flight around in a circle. The big fish, in its efforts to get rid of the hook, and escape that relentless pulling, was fighting with all its savage strength. With fins and tail it sought to get away.

"Pull! Pull!" cried Sam. "Ned, stand ready with the hatchet, and clip him on the head when you get a show!"

Closer and closer to the boat they pulled the shark. They could almost grasp the chain part of the line now. Then, above the water, was thrust the ugly head of the fish. While it was not a man-eater, or as large as the shark of the tropical seas, being in fact only an immense dog fish, the creature was so ugly and horrible, with its under-shot mouth, and unblinking eyes, that Jerry and Bob were almost inclined to let go.

"Hold on!" cautioned Sam, taking a turn of the rope about a cleat.

Then the fish lashed out more furiously than ever with its tail. The water was white with foam. The big jaws snapped ominously close to the boat. The craft rocked and pitched with the violence of the fish's efforts.

"Quick, Ned, or he'll upset us!" called Sam.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ABANDONED VESSEL

"I CAN'T reach him!" cried Ned, leaning as far over as he could, hatchet in hand.

"Have to pull him closer," panted Sam. "Altogether now, boys!"

The three grasped the chain and hauled. Nearer and nearer, came the fighting shark. The jaws never ceased snapping in an endeavor to bite through the chain.

"Quick, Ned!" cried Jerry.

Ned raised the keen little axe. Resting one hand on the gunwale he leaned forward, and, with all his strength sent the blade into the head of the big fish. It was buried almost to the handle.

There was one wild, convulsive lashing of the tail, one final tremendous effort on the part of the shark to break away. Then, with a quiver, which almost shook loose the hold of Sam and the boys, the big fish was helpless.

"There!" remarked the sailor, with a sigh of relief, "that was a fine catch, and a bigger one

than I counted on. He put up a good fight."

"How big is he?" asked Jerry, as he wrapped his handkerchief around his hand where the rope had cut it.

"Seven feet if he's an inch," replied Sam. "Folks'll pay money to see him."

"Looks as if some were coming now," put in Bob.

They all glanced toward shore, as they were now opposite Harmon Beach, and from the summer resort a number of boats were putting off, headed for the *Dartaway*.

"Wonder what's up?" said Jerry.

Sam was engaged in putting a line about the shark's tail, by means of a boat hook, in order to secure his prize, as the barb might pull from the jaw. On his direction the boys also put a cable about the fish's gills, and the two lines were fastened to a cleat at the stern of the craft.

"Now we'll head for shore," said the sailor.

By this time several motor boats were within hailing distance of the boys' craft.

"What's the matter? Are you sinking? Do you want any help?" were some of the cries.

"No, we're just shark-hunting," replied Jerry.

"It looked, from shore, as though you were trying to keep the boat from sinking," said a young

fellow in the nearest craft. "There was a general alarm, and we all started out for you."

"Much obliged," Jerry replied. "But we're all right."

The other boats crowded around, the occupants looking in wonder at the big fish, which was being towed close to the surface. The shark was taken safely ashore and Sam, showing his prize under canvas, reaped another harvest, only not so large as in the case of the whale.

"What will you boys do next?" asked Mrs. Hopkins with something like despair in her tones, when she heard of the latest adventure of her son and his chums. "Jerry, I'm afraid to have you go out in that boat."

"Why, there's no danger, mother. We can all swim."

"But suppose a shark, like the one you caught, should come after you?"

"Those aren't the kind that eat people," put in Ned, anxious to reassure Mrs. Hopkins.

"I'll never go bathing again unless it's in the tank," said the widow. "I'll always be thinking of sharks."

"We haven't begun to exhaust the possibilities of this place," put in Jerry.

"Now do be careful, please," begged Mrs. Hopkins, and the boys promised faithfully.

The boys remembered this promise about three days. In that time they turned down a request of Sam's that they go off on another shark-hunting expedition, and also one to take a long cruise to the southern part of the coast after another whale, he said he had heard was sighted.

"We'd like to help you, Sam," said Jerry. "But it's too much risk."

"Well I'll bet you boys will take bigger ones when I'm not with you," the sailor said. "Never mind, I've made more money this summer than I ever did in a season before, thanks to you. Any time you want Sam's help, just come to him," and he strolled off singing:

"I caught a shark, I caught a whale,
I caught a lobster by the tail.
I caught a skate, I caught its mate,
All hands on deck and don't be late!"

"It's about time we made a trip to the other lighthouse to see if we can spot Bill Berry," remarked Ned one afternoon.

"Shall we ask Sam to go along?" came from Jerry.

"Well, he seems to know the ropes, and he's

lots of fun. Besides we sort of turned him down the last time he asked us to go out."

It was agreed that they would take the old sailor, but when they sought him they learned he had gone off for a couple of days on a fishing trip. They decided they would await his return. In the meanwhile they made short trips up and down the beach, going ashore to have lunch, which was served from the boat's pantry. Mrs. Hopkins was a guest on one or two occasions.

One morning the boys were awakened at the cottage by a loud pounding at the kitchen door. None of the servants was up and Jerry, poking his head from his bed room window, which overlooked the rear entrance, called out:

"Who's there?"

"It's me! Sam! Hurry up boys!"

"What's the matter? Is the place on fire?"

"No, but there's a big vessel gone on the reef down the coast."

"A wreck?"

"Yes, and she's abandoned."

"Anybody killed?"

"No, the life-savers got every one off. But there's a chance to pick up some cargo, and make money. She's pounding to pieces fast. Hurry,

'fore the other boats get ahead of us. All hands on deck!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Mrs. Hopkins, who was awakened by Sam's excited voice.

"Oh, he wants us to go out and see a wreck," spoke her son.

"Now, Jerry, be careful."

"I will, mother. There's no danger. Hi! Ned and Bob! Going to sleep all day?"

His chums got up in a hurry at the hail and, while they were dressing, Jerry told them what Sam had said.

"He's always around when there's a chance to make money," commented Ned.

"It'll be worth while to see a wreck," Bob remarked. I'm glad the crew and passengers were saved."

The boys made a hurried breakfast and then went down to the dock where the *Dartaway* was tied. They found Sam before them, getting things ready for the trip. He had a number of boat-hooks and several coils of rope.

"Might as well go at this thing scientific," he said. "We ought to be able to pick up a good bit of the floating cargo."

"How did it happen?" asked Ned.

"Made a mistake in the lights, I hear," the sailor replied. "Thought they were further up the coast. It was thick last night, and they went on the reef. Valuable cargo, too, and they threw a lot overboard, trying to lighten the ship, before they found it was hopeless."

In a little while the *Dartaway* was speeding out of the harbor, and down the coast toward the wrecked vessel. The haze of the night before had lifted and the air was clear. The sea was calm, though Sam seemed a little surprised as he glanced at the barometer.

"She's falling," he muttered.

"What does that men?" asked Bob.

"Well, it generally indicates a storm," the sailor replied. "But I guess we'll be back long before it comes. There's no sign of it now."

The boat was speeding along at good speed. The coast line opened up as they forged ahead, and soon they had a good view of a broad expanse of water.

"There she is!" cried Sam, pointing ahead.

"What?" inquired the boys all at once.

"The wreck."

"I can't see anything," objected Ned.

"See that little black speck, just below where that gull is hovering?"

"Yes."

"That's it."

"Must be quite a way out," commented Jerry.

"Seven miles," the sailor replied. "But that's nothing. The whale took us farther."

CHAPTER XVIII

ABOARD THE WRECK

THE motor boat made good time, and about an hour later was almost at the wreck, which, as the boys could see, was that of quite a good sized steamer. She had run well up on a rocky reef, and when the tide fell, the strain had "broken her back" so that the bow and stern were separated. The stern was low in the water, and gradually settling.

"Good thing it's calm," Sam remarked, "we can get close up, and, perhaps go aboard."

"Will they let us?" asked Jerry.

"There's nobody to stop us," replied the sailor. "The ship is abandoned. True, we can't take anything away, but we can pick up anything we see floating, and claim salvage on it, and, by the looks there's a lot of cargo gone overboard."

By this time they were quite close to the wreck. On one side the waves were breaking against the steamer in a way that made it dangerous to approach. The motor boat was sent around, how-

ever, and Sam saw a place protected enough to allow the *Dartaway* to go up close.

It required a nice bit of seamanship to get aboard, but here was where Sam's long years of service served him and the boys in good stead. They made their boat fast to some dangling ropes, and soon were on the sloping deck of the after part of the wrecked steamer.

All about were evidences of the haste with which the crew and passengers had departed. On the deck were scattered articles of clothing; boxes and trunks had been broken open and the most valuable things taken.

The boys ventured to the edge of the deck, where it had been almost completely separated from the forward part. They could look down through the various holds and into the engine room.

"Pity to see all this gone to waste," remarked Jerry. "Can't they save any of it?"

"Don't look so," replied the sailor. "It's about as bad a wreck as I ever saw. They'll have hard work lightering the cargo off here. Maybe it's well insured."

It was a new and novel experience for the boys to be aboard a big wrecked steamer. They went below, though it was anything but easy, consider-

ing the condition of the companionways which were at all angles. They went through the cabins, into some of the staterooms, and saw many valuable articles, but Sam advised them not to touch any.

"I'm not clear on the law," he said. "I know it's all right to pick stuff out of the sea, but it may be piracy or worse to take it off a vessel so near shore. We'll get enough as it is. I see the stuff is fairly tumbling from the hold in the forward part of the ship."

"Hark! What's that noise?" asked Jerry suddenly, holding up his hand for silence.

Above the splash of the waves against the side there sounded a long, drawn-out cry.

"It's a baby! Some one has forgotten their baby!" cried Sam. "The life savers took everybody off, and left the baby behind!"

Once more the cry came. It was a regular wail.

"That's a cat!" declared Bob.

"I tell you it's a baby!" the sailor insisted.

This time there came an unmistakable "mew!"

"Where is it?" inquired Jerry.

They listened and the cry was repeated several times. They finally traced it to an open hatchway, and, looking down could dimly make out the form of a cat on some boxes.

"Come on up, pussy," called Ned.

"Mew! Mew!" cried the feline, as though asking for help.

"Guess it can't get out," Sam said. "Things are all topsy-turvy down there."

"Will we have to leave the poor thing here to drown?" Ned asked. He was very fond of animals.

"I guess not," the sailor replied. "Salt Water Sam ain't that kind. I wish it was a baby though, I'm terrible fond of babies."

"How are you going to get it?" asked Bob.

"I'll show you," and the sailor began looking about for a means of rescuing the kitten.

He soon found what he wanted. It was a long rope, and before the boys had fathomed his intention he rove one end of it through a pulley on the end of a boom that projected from a mast, and which had been used to hoist cargo from the hold.

"Now if you boys will lower me down I'll get the pussy and you can haul us both up," Sam said, as he fastened the rope about his waist. The chums did as he requested, and soon Sam's head disappeared into the depths of the vessel. The boys could hear him calling:

"Here, pussy! Here, pussy! Sam'll take care of you! Must be hungry, poor little kittie!"

They felt the rope slacken, indicating that the sailor had landed on the pile of boxes. Then it shook, showing that Sam was after the cat. A little later they heard him calling:

"Haul away! I've got her!"

Just as the boys began to pull on the rope that was to hoist the sailor from the hold there came a sudden jar to the wreck. The deck, that was tilted at a sharp angle, assumed a more decided one. At the same time there was a grinding, crashing sound.

"Hurry!" yelled Sam. She's breaking up!"

There was a sickening lurch to the after part of the ship. The boys could hardly keep their feet.

"Pull! Pull!" cried Sam, from the depths of the hold, where the cargo could be heard shifting about.

"All together!" sang out Jerry, and the boys put all their strength to the rope. Sam came up "on the run" and was landed on deck. He held the cat in his arms, the frightened creature clinging closely to him.

"No time to lose, boys!" cried the sailor, as he loosened the rope from his waist. "She's sliding off into deep water. We must leave her!"

They made a rush for the side, climbed over the bulwarks and slid down the rope into the

Dartaway. The cat still clung to Sam. The boys could see the wreck moving off the reef which had hitherto held it in place. It was slipping into the deep water astern.

"Start the engine!" cried Jerry as he sprang to the wheel. Ned turned the fly wheel over. The chug-chug sounded at once, and with a splutter the boat was off, darting away from the wreck.

"Get well out! Well out!" cried Sam, "or we'll be sucked under!"

Jerry speeded up the motor. The boys looked back. Faster and faster the stern of the wreck was slipping into the sea. The waters seemed to be reaching up to swallow it.

Then, with a sound like a great sigh half the steamer disappeared from sight beneath the waves. There was a boiling and bubbling in the water, and a giant whirlpool formed. But the *Dartaway* was beyond the reach of it. The force of the sucking currents tossed the small craft about, but Jerry kept the engine going at full speed, and soon they were in calmer water.

"That was a narrow squeak," observed Sam. "But we saved the cat, anyhow," and he patted the animal.

The sea, all about them, was dotted with bales and boxes from the ships. More were constantly

coming to the surface as they were released from the sunken wreck.

"Better make hay while the sea is calm," observed Sam. "There'll be a lot more boats out here in a little while, and we want to get out share of the wreckage."

Then with the boat-hooks they had brought the boys and the sailor began pulling in what they could reach. Some of the boxes seemed to be very light.

"I wonder if there's anything in 'em?" Bob asked.

"They're labeled," spoke Ned.

"Cinchona bark," read Jerry. "Why, that's the stuff they make quinine from. This is valuable."

"I thought we'd make something on this deal," said Sam, much pleased. "You stick to Salt Water Sam and you'll be rich."

"It begins to look so," admitted Ned, with a laugh.

"Here come some more boats," called Jerry, and he pointed to where several power craft, and some big dories could be seen approaching.

The occupants were bent on the same work as were the boys, and they picked up all the floating wreckage they could.

"Better not overload the craft," Sam cautioned, after half an hour's work.

"Why, it's calm, and we only have a short run to shore," objected Jerry, who wanted to get all of the valuable bark he could. Some of the boxes and bales were too heavy to be taken into the *Dart-away*.

"Well, I don't like the looks of the weather," Sam answered. "There's no immediate danger, but you never can tell what a gasoline engine will do. Remember our one experience."

"Then you think we'd better start back?" asked Ned.

"Well, say in an hour," was the sailor's reply.

"Why, it's two o'clock," exclaimed Bob, as he looked at his watch. "Two hours past dinner time. I'm starved!"

CHAPTER XIX

ADRIFT IN THE STORM

"I GUESS it wouldn't be a bad plan to eat, and then point for home," Sam observed. "Have we got any grub aboard?"

"Plenty, trust Chunky for that," came from Ned. "Set it out, Bob."

Bob went to the locker where the food was kept. As he opened it he gave a start.

"What's the matter?" asked Jerry.

"There's not much left," the fleshy youth replied. "I forgot to fill up the lockers last night, and we've been having several picnics this week."

"I guess there's enough until we get home to supper," Ned put in, taking a look. "Of course there is, Chunky. You must be especially hungry."

"I am," sighed the fat lad. "But I'll have to stand it, I suppose."

There was just enough food and water for one meal, but no one worried. They were only seven miles from shore, and there was a number of boats around them.

They ate their meal leisurely, and, when they had finished there was a can of sardines and a few crackers left.

"Hello! Where are all the other boats?" exclaimed Jerry as he looked about. None was in sight.

The sea was deserted, besides their own craft, only the forward part of the wreck was to be seen. The waves were still covered with floating debris.

"I guess it's time we scooted," remarked the sailor. "The storm's going to break sooner than I expected. The glass is falling rapidly. Put for shore, boys."

Jerry went forward to start the engine, which had been stopped. He turned the gasolene and spark levers, and Bob threw over the wheel. There was no answering explosion.

"Once more," Jerry said.

Again Bob turned. The wheel spun around under his efforts, but there was no chug-chug.

"Queer," muttered Jerry. "What's the trouble? She never acts like this unless something's the matter. Ned, see if we have plenty of gasolene."

Ned sounded the tank in the bow.

"Well?" inquired Jerry, as Ned seemed to be at the operation longer than was necessary.

"There isn't any."

"Isn't any?"

"Not a drop! See!" and he held up the sounding stick. It was as dry as a bone, only the odor of the fluid clinging to it.

"Why, it was full when we started! How could it get out?"

"Well, it *is* out," Ned replied.

Jerry made an examination. As much of the tank as he could see did not appear to be damaged. He was at a loss to account for the disappearance of the gasolene. He looked over the side and uttered an exclamation.

"There's what did it!"

"What?" asked Bob.

Jerry pointed to a small iron rod which had pierced the bow of the *Dartaway* from the outside. It had penetrated through the galvanized iron gasolene tank, and the fluid had run out into the ocean. There was enough space around the iron, which was still in place, to allow the fluid to get out, but, as the rod had entered in an upward, slanting direction the hole did not admit any sea water, so the boat did not leak.

"How in the world did that get there?" asked Jerry, as he gradually worked the rod out.

"Must have stuck into us when we were at the

wreck," put in Sam. "That's just how it happened. Good thing it was no bigger."

"Lucky the gasolene didn't all leak out until we got away from being sucked down in the whirlpool," remarked Ned. "The rocking of the boat helped it run out."

"Well, what are you going to do?" inquired Jerry.

"Hoist some sort of a signal," advised Ned. "Otherwise we'll be here all night."

"All night!" exclaimed Bob. "And no grub! Oh, it makes me hungry to think of it!"

"Chunky, I would think for once you might let up on your everlasting appetite," came from Jerry a little sternly. "We are just as badly off as you are."

"I can't help it, Jerry. Just think of it, only one can of sardines among four of us! Let's see, there are ten sardines in a can, that's two and a half each! Why, I've often eaten two whole boxes myself."

"You'll be lucky if you ever eat again, sonny," said Sam, with an anxious look at the sky.

"Are we in any danger?"

"Well, of course we may come out all right, but shiver my timbers, I don't like the looks of that bank of clouds over in the east. It's coming

on to blow, or I'm mistaken, and that's something which doesn't often happen to Salt Water, Sam."

"What had we better do?" asked Jerry.

"It might be a good plan to hoist a signal. After that we can get things ship-shape, and wait. That's all."

The *Dartaway's* flag, upside down, a signal of distress, was fastened to a boat-hook, that being the tallest pole they had, and fastened in the bow. Then, under Sam's direction they fastened the awning well down, and, with a bit of tarpaulin rigged up a small sail, by means of some boat-hooks.

"We'll need steerage way," said the sailor, "and we haven't a drag this time."

"Had we better throw overboard some of this cargo?" asked Ned.

"No, it's not heavy enough to do any harm, and it will make the boat a little steadier," said the sailor.

It was getting quite hazy by this time, and there was a curious calm to the air, as though the storm was just waiting for the word to break in all its fury. The water had a strange oily look, and the waves rolled without the least bit of foam flying from their crests.

The *Dartaway* was the only craft in sight, save where a dull blot showed that part of the wreck

still clung to the rocks that had broken her back. The other boats had long ago scudded for shelter. The shore could not be discerned, and even the lighthouse, which was usually visible for a long distance, was wiped out.

There was nothing more to be done. Anxiously the boys scanned the ocean for a sight of some craft that might tow them in. They had no means of moving, as there was no wind, as yet, and they had some time ago gotten into the habit of leaving out a pair of oars with which most motor boats are provided to use in case of emergency. They had seldom needed them, and they would have been of small service, anyway, as the craft was too heavy to be propelled in that fashion at sea.

"Well, we're as ready for it as we'll ever be," remarked Sam, when he had seen for a second time to all the fastenings. "Let her come and get it over with."

"Do you think we'd better eat now, or — or afterward?" came from Bob.

"Chunky, if you mention grub again until we're safe ashore I'll throw you overboard!" cried Jerry. He had seldom spoken so sharply, and it told of the strain he was under.

"There now," came soothingly from Sam.

"Don't worry. If worst comes to worst we can live for several days on ten sardines. I was on a raft once, afloat ten days, and all I had was a pair of boots, and one shoe lace. That was hard lines! And we might eat the cat!"

"Never!" cried the boys.

An hour or more passed, with the *Dartaway* drifting aimlessly on the ocean, which was beginning to heave as if from the influence of some hidden power. It grew much darker, though it was only about five o'clock.

"Do you s'pose the life-savers will see us?" asked Ned. "They have a station near here, where they came out from to rescue those from the wreck."

"No chance of them seeing us this far out," said Sam. "They could see where the wreck was in the mist, as it sent up signal lights. But we haven't any."

"I'll always carry them after this," spoke Jerry.

The inverted pennant of the boat fluttered a little in the breeze. The haze seemed to grow thicker. The sailor stood up and looked on all sides. Then he tightened the ropes holding the improvised sail, and made it smaller in area, not by reefing it, for there was no way of doing that,

but by setting it lower on the rigged " jury " mast. He also took down the ensign.

" No need of losing that," he said, " and it's sure to go when the blow comes. It can't be seen a quarter of a mile away now."

Now, over the waters, came a strange, weird sound, as though some one had blown on a big conch shell, miles away. It grew in volume until it filled all the air. The boys looked about in wonder.

" It's the wind! Here comes the storm! " cried Sam.

An instant later the blast came. It flattened down the heaving waves for a few seconds, and then blew off their tops in a spray of foam.

The motor boat heeled over, as though it would capsize. Then the small sail filled out. All at once the wind seemed to die away. But, a few seconds later it came with increased fury.

" It's shifted! " cried Sam. " We're being blown out to sea! "

The *Dartaway* spun around like a top, and scudded through the waves.

CHAPTER XX

NODDY'S COMPANION

Now the storm had broken in all its power. How the wind whistled over the boat, almost tearing the awning loose! But Sam had seen to the fastenings, and the old sailor well knew the awful force of a gale. The sail, too, held, though it needed all the strength of the ropes Sam had carefully placed here and there to brace it.

"Take the wheel!" roared Sam to Jerry. "I'll look after things here!"

Making his way as best he could along the rolling and pitching boat, Jerry grasped the steering apparatus. It was all he could do to hold the helm, so violently was the rudder twisted from side to side.

Well for those aboard the *Dartaway* that she was a stanch craft, well that she had been built with a view to hard service. For now her stoutness was called upon, and now was her stability likely to be tested to the utmost.

Once the first fury of the blast was over the

boys did not seem to mind it so much. It did not appear to blow so hard when they were scudding along with the wind. The sea was soon a rolling mass of billows, but the *Dartaway* with her water-tight compartments, rode over the waves like a duck. True, she was tossed here and there, but her covered bow and stern did not allow any water to enter, while the spray, except now and then in a violent gust, was prevented from coming aboard by the stout awning.

The red and green side lights had been set aglow some time before, though it is doubtful if they could be seen ten feet away, because of the tossing waves.

"Let's start the search-light," said Ned. "It will show us where we are going and prevent us being run down."

Sam said it would be a good plan, and the beacon was soon ignited, sending out its glaring pencil of light over the dark and angry waters.

"She'll stand to come in a bit," called Sam to Jerry. "Hold as close to the wind as you can, and we'll try and scud along the coast. We may fetch up somewhere on a point if we're not too far out."

Jerry shifted the wheel, and the *Dartaway*, answering well to her new power, changed her

course. Suddenly it began to rain, a downpour so violent that it served in a measure to flatten down the crests of the waves.

Though the rain served this good turn, it was unwelcome on another account. Tight as the awning was, much water now came in through the flaps that would blow open a bit, in spite of Sam's efforts. In a little while there was scarcely a dry spot aboard the boat, and the occupants were wet through.

But, in spite of their terror (and the boys were not ashamed to admit they were frightened); in spite of their plight which was about as bad as could be, there was a certain feeling of pride in their boat. It was a gallant craft, and the lads, more than ever, felt the *Dartaway* was a friend indeed.

On and on the wind drove her. It was impossible to tell where they were. The searchlight showed a waste of heaving waters and a downpour of rain, that fell on the top of the canopy as though it would beat it down about the heads of the occupants of the craft. The wind blew more steadily now.

"We're all right," spoke Sam, encouragingly. "We'll weather the gale."

A small acetyline lamp inside the awnings gave

light and by its glow Ned made some coffee on the gasolene stove. It took the last of their slender supply of water, but Sam said they had better keep their strength up through the storm, as they would probably get help by morning. Then, with the ten sardines and the crackers they made a midnight lunch which, in spite of the surrounding, was much enjoyed.

Through the whole of the night they were driven by the storm. How he steered Jerry never knew. It was going it blind, in the dark. But the *Dartaway* carried them safe, and, when morning dawned, the rain had ceased, the sun came up and the wind had become merely a fresh breeze. It had shifted its direction again, at which Sam, after a glance at the compass, uttered a joyful cry.

"Couldn't be better," he announced. "It'll take us right back home again. Say, you boys are certainly lucky!"

They opened the awnings and let the boat dry out. Then, with the wind at their backs, filling the sail, which had been made as large as possible, they headed for home.

"No breakfast!" sighed Chunky, but to himself. He did not want the others to overhear.

No one except the fleshy youth seemed to mind

the lack of food, however, though all were very thirsty, and there was not a drop of water aboard.

"We ought to make land by noon, at this rate," Sam said.

Chunky said nothing, but he pulled his belt a little tighter across his stomach. He seemed to feel better, when he had thus reduced the "size of his hunger."

It was about ten o'clock that morning when Sam, who was steering, cried:

"There's the lighthouse, boys! We'll put in there for repairs."

There, looming up in the sun was the big white tower that stood on a rocky point which jutted out from the main land. It was still several miles away, but their present course was taking them straight toward it. It was the lower or South light, as it was called, the one the boys had intended to visit, but which they had not as yet.

"I hope he's got gasolene there," said Jerry. "I can mend the tank, and we can soon be home."

"I guess Peter Hardack, the keeper, can fix you up," spoke Sam. "He keeps a lot of supplies on hand."

An hour later they were at the lighthouse. The keeper saw them coming and was down to his small

dock to meet them. When he saw Sam the keeper exclaimed: :

"If it isn't my old friend! What have you done, turned motor pirate?"

The sailor briefly explained their plight.

"Come right in!" exclaimed the hospitable Mr. Hardack. "I'll get you some breakfast and you can dry your clothes."

"Have you any gasolene, and can we send a message to Harmon Beach?" asked Jerry anxiously.

"Both, sonny. Come right in."

The boat was made fast to the dock, and the little party of mariners were escorted into the living rooms of the lighthouse, which were in a small apartment built around the base of the tower.

"Here Jessica!" called Mr. Hardack. "Jessica! Where are you?"

"Coming, uncle," called a voice, and a tall pretty girl entered the room, stopping in confusion at the sight of the strangers.

"Here are some almost-shipwrecked people," the keeper went on with a smile. "They want some hot coffee, and anything else you have."

"Don't go to any trouble," said Ned, and Bob glared at his chum.

"Oh it's no trouble. My niece will see to things. And take care of the cat, too."

While breakfast was being prepared Jerry telephoned to a hotel near his mother's house and asked that a message be sent to relieve her worry. Then, having borrowed some old clothes of the keeper, the boys and Sam dried their own.

After breakfast Jerry mended the leak in the gasolene tank, and, buying some of the fluid from the keeper, soon had the *Dartaway* in shape for another voyage. They bade their new friends good-bye, receiving an invitation to come again, and soon they were back at Harmon Beach. They took the cat with them and Mrs. Hopkins made a pet of it.

They found there was some excitement over their absence all night, but Mrs. Hopkins had come to regard the boys' escapades with a sort of philosophy. She believed the lads would turn up all right somehow.

Sam attended to the matter of the salvaged cargo. An agent for the steamer came to the beach, and took charge of all the stuff that had been saved from the sea. The sailor and the boys received a goodly sum for the valuable bark they had saved.

It was about a week after this that the three

lads had gone in their boat to a small summer resort about three miles down the coast, where there were varied amusement features. They took in several of them, and, as they were strolling along the boardwalk, getting ready to come home, Jerry nudged Ned.

"Who's that just ahead of us?" he asked.

Ned looked. At that moment a girl and a youth just in advance of the three boys came under an electric light.

"Why, it's Noddy Nixon!" exclaimed Ned in a whisper.

"And who's with him?"

"The girl from the lighthouse! Jessica!"

CHAPTER XXI

A RACE WITH NODDY

FOR a few moments the boys were too surprised to know what to say. They trailed along after Noddy and the girl, noting that the two seemed to be enjoying themselves. As the couple entered an ice cream store Jerry remarked:

"Well, it's a free country. He can take out any girl he likes, I suppose, and we haven't anything to do with her."

"It makes me mad to see a nice girl like that out with such a fellow as Noddy," exclaimed Ned.

"Ah, I guess Ned's lost his heart," spoke Bob.

"Lost nothing!" sputtered Ned. "But you know what sort of a chap Noddy Nixon is. Would you want him to go out with any girl you knew?"

"But you don't know this one," said Jerry.

"I've been introduced to her," replied Ned. "But I suppose it's none of our business. Come on, let's go home."

"I guess Ned is rather smitten with Jessica,"

remarked Jerry in a low voice to Bob, as they started for Harmon Beach.

"Don't blame him," came from Bob. "She's a fine girl."

On the way home the chums talked over Noddy's sudden reappearance. They agreed he was not a pleasant acquaintance to have, but decided as long as he did not interfere with them they could do nothing.

"I wonder if Bill Berry is still around," said Ned. "Haven't heard anything from him lately."

"That's one thing I forgot when we were at the lighthouse," spoke Jerry. "I meant to ask Mr. Hardack if he had a helper, but it slipped my mind."

"Perhaps you were too busy looking at Jessica," came from Bob.

"Not exactly," replied his chum. "But I must admit I had a strange feeling when I heard the keeper call her Jessica. I thought of the man in the wreck."

"She can't be the same one," argued Ned. "He was an old man, and his daughter must be quite a woman by this time. Jessica is only a girl. Besides, her name is different."

"Jess and Jessica might be the same," put in Bob.

"There are lots of things that might happen," Jerry commented. "We'll have to wait and see what turns up."

"Are you going to the lighthouse again?" asked Ned.

"We might," Jerry replied. "I want to ask about Bill Berry. But you needn't come along."

"I guess I've got as good a right there as you have."

"Oh, of course, but I thought you might not like to see Jessica, seeing that she had such bad taste as to go out with Noddy Nixon."

"She doesn't know him as well as we do," said Ned hotly.

"Never mind, I was only joking," Jerry added. "We'll all go to the lighthouse, and see what we can learn."

When the boys got home that night they found Sam awaiting them. He was in the dining room and was telling Mrs. Hopkins some of his sea stories. Jerry's mother was much interested in the old sailor.

"Want to go blue fishing to-morrow?" Sam asked, when the boys had begun eating a little

lunch the cook sent in, probably in honor of Bob.

"Sure!" was the cry in a chorus.

"They're running fine," the sailor replied. "Old Pete Scud went out to-day and got forty-five."

They arranged to go the next day, and started early in the morning. They had excellent sport, and the boys landed several beauties.

"What will we do with them all?" asked Jerry, as he looked at the pile of fish in the big basket in the boat.

"We can sell most of 'em," replied the sailor. "The rest you can give to your friends."

"Can I have a couple of the big ones?" asked Ned.

"Sure," answered Jerry. "What do you want 'em for?"

"I'm going to make a present of them."

Sam was given the larger part of the catch, the boys keeping enough for the cottage, while Ned took two of the finest ones.

"What are you going to do with them?" asked Jerry, as they got back to the dock about noon.

"Well if you must know I thought I'd take them to Mr. Hardack at the lighthouse. He probably likes fish."

"Probably Jessica does, also," put in Bob, with

a grin that caused Ned to make a sudden lunge at his chum.

"We'll go with you," said Jerry. "Take the fish along, Ned. It will be a sort of love offering," and he laughed, while Ned blushed.

That afternoon the three boys in their boat started for the South Light, as it was called to distinguished it from the next one above, or the North. The fish had been packed in ice to keep them fresh, Ned attending to this item with much care.

The day was a fine one, and as the *Dartaway* sped out of the harbor and round the point, preparatory to going down the coast, the boys chanted one of Salt Water Sam's odd songs.

"This is glorious!" cried Bob. "I wish it would last forever. A life on the ocean wave for me all right."

"Except when we run out of grub," put in Ned, with a grin.

As they swung down along the coast, the boat making good speed, their attention was attracted to the puffing of a craft just behind them. They looked and saw another motor boat coming along at a lively clip. In it were two figures.

"Don't let them pass us," called Jerry to Ned, who was at the wheel.

"Don't worry. It'll have to be a pretty good boat to pass the *Dartaway*."

The newcomer seemed inclined to race. He was getting his engine up to top speed, and the pile of water in front of the bow of his craft showed he meant business.

The boys began to sit up and take notice. They saw that the other boat was a swift one, and, as it was a trifle smaller than theirs, and narrower, it stood a better chance. But they were not going to give up so easily.

Jerry and Bob began oiling the motor while Ned settled down to business. He shoved the levers over, and, for a while ran the *Dartaway* on second speed. By this time the other boat was about opposite them.

"Can you see who's in it?" asked Jerry of Ned.

"No. Seems to be a fellow and a girl. He has a cap on, and I can't see his face. Her hair blows about her so I can't make out who she is."

The occupant of the other boat evidently had accepted the race, and was doing his best to win. He was steering a straight course, and the two craft were not more than a hundred yards apart.

They kept it up for a couple of miles, the en-

gines exploding away like a battery of Gatling guns in full action. Gradually the *Dartaway* began to draw ahead. Inch by inch she left her opponent behind, until he was hopelessly out of the race.

"Better slow down now, cautioned Jerry. "We're close to the lighthouse."

Net shut off some power, and, a few minutes later, steered the boat up to the small dock at the base of the lighthouse.

"Glad to see you!" called a voice, and the keeper came down the stone steps to welcome them. "Haven't been out in any more storms, have you?"

"Not lately," replied Jerry. "How are you?"

"Oh, things are always the same here. Come in and have a bite to eat. My niece is away but I'm pretty good at setting the table."

Ned's face showed the disappointment he felt.

"Here are some fish we caught," he said, offering them to Mr. Hardack.

"Well now! Say, that's kind of you. I was just wishing for some blues, and I haven't time to get any. I told my helper to get some, but he's not as spry as he might be."

"What's his name," asked Jerry, thinking this

a good opening to find out what he wanted to know.

"Merry — no, it ain't Merry, it's Cherry — no, it ain't Cherry either — land I am forgetful. It's some name like that. Berry — that's it — William Berry. I've only had him a few weeks. My other man took sick and I had to get one in a hurry."

The boys looked at each other. None of them dared to make a remark, but Jerry seemed much excited.

"Come on in," went on Mr. Hardack. "Well I declare, there's another boat coming. That must be Jessica. She went out for a cruise with a young chap she met at an entertainment or something the other night."

The boys looked and saw the craft they had lately raced with coming to the dock. In a little while it was so close they could make out the features of those in the motor boat.

The girl was Jessica, and the youth was Noddy Nixon.

CHAPTER XXII

OVERHEARING A PLOT

NODDY was so much engaged in making a landing at the dock that he did not observe the three boys until he had come up alongside the string piece. Then, as he glanced up, he muttered an exclamation below his breath.

"Oh, uncle, I had a lovely ride!" exclaimed Jessica, as she got out. "It was glorious! Oh, there are the boys who were almost shipwrecked the other night," and she bowed to the motor lads.

"Well, now you must all come in and have a glass of milk and some cake," said Mr. Hardack. "Jessica bakes fine cake."

"That's the way uncle flatters me!" exclaimed the girl with a laugh. "But come in, all of you; please do."

The motor boys were in a quandry. They wanted to see the workings of the lighthouse, which they had been told were quite novel. Ned had to admit he wanted to see Jessica, and Jerry was anxious to get more information about Bill

Berry. As for Noddy, he did not seem to know what to do. He was fumbling at the painter of the boat he was in.

'Aren't you coming in, Mr. Nixon?" asked Jessica.

"I forgot — I have an engagement," muttered Noddy. He bent over the engine and was cranking it up. "I'll see you again, Miss Jessica," he called, and with a bow, he steered his boat away from the dock.

"Well, you three boys come in," insisted the keeper. "We have very little company here, and we must make the most of it. See the fine blue fish they brought me, Jessica."

"They're lovely," the girl said, though she looked a little troubled. Ned wondered if she regretted Noddy's departure.

Over the simple lunch which was soon set out the boys grew better acquainted with the keeper and his niece. She mentioned that she had met Noddy at a sociable where a girl companion had introduced her to him.

"He's very nice to me," Jessica confided to Ned. "He is going to take me for a long ride in the boat some day. It's very fast, even if you did beat us to-day. His engine wasn't working right, or he'd have come in first."

Ned tried to turn the conversation. He did not want to talk about Noddy behind his back.

"There's my assistant," spoke Mr. Hardack, as he pointed out of the window. Jerry and his chums looked. Though they said nothing they had no difficulty in recognizing Bill Berry. He was filling some lanterns at an oil box in the yard.

"I don't much fancy him," the keeper went on. "He's too silent. This is a lonesome place, and I like persons who can talk. I hope you boys will come again."

"We'll be glad to," Jerry replied.

Mr. Hardack showed them all over the lighthouse. They inspected the machinery, which, by means of weights, revolved the frame containing the powerful lenses.

"We flash one white light and two red lights at intervals," explained the keeper.

"And if anything should interfere with the proper workings of the machinery, I suppose there would be danger," said Bob.

"Well, I guess so! The sailors depend on seeing a white flash and two red ones when they get here. It means keep out. Why we even have an emergency apparatus, so that if the automatic one breaks we can turn the lenses by hand. The government doesn't want any failure of the light."

The boys were shown through the store room, near the kitchen, where the oil and other supplies were kept. The lighthouse was some distance from any settlement, and in stormy weather it was hard to get food and other necessities. So a goodly supply was kept in stock.

"I think we'd better be going," remarked Jerry, as he looked at his watch and noted it was four o'clock. He wanted to get off with his chums and talk over matters.

"Don't be in a hurry," spoke Mr. Hardack. "We don't get enough company as it is, do we Jessica?"

"No, indeed, uncle."

"Did you ask if there was any mail?" asked the keeper, of his niece.

"Yes, I stopped at the post-office when I was out with Mr. Nixon, but there were no letters."

"Strange; we ought to hear pretty soon now," and the keeper seemed worried about something.

"I'm sure we're much obliged for showing us the place," put in Ned, and then he started out, followed by his chums. Mr. Hardack went down to the dock with them. On the way Jerry tried to get a look at Bill Berry, who was still busy filling lamps, but the man kept his back turned.

"Now don't forget to come again," Mr. Hard-

ack went on, as the boys got in their boat. "You see my niece is sort of lonesome. That's the reason I let her go off with that Nixon fellow once in a while, though I don't exactly like him. She wants cheering up."

"Is anything the matter?" inquired Ned.

"Yes, you see her father, he —"

But the rest of what Mr. Hardack would have said was lost as, just then, Bob started the motor, and it made such a noise until Jerry slowed it down, that the keeper's words were inaudible. When the noise had ceased the boat was some distance from the dock, and Mr. Hardack was waving them a farewell. Ned thought he saw a handkerchief shaken from a window in the lighthouse, but was not sure.

"I wonder what he was going to say about her father," Jerry said, when they had headed the boat for home.

"He's dead, probably," Ned spoke. "She dresses in black, you notice."

"I didn't notice particularly, but it seems you did."

"I've got eyes," was all Ned replied.

"Queer Noddy should be sporting around there in a motor boat," said Bob. "I wonder where he got it?"

"Bought it, same as we did," came from Jerry, "or hired it. His father keeps him supplied with money, in spite of his escapades."

The boys paid several other visits to the lighthouse, and each time received a warm welcome. They found Jessica home only once; the other occasions she was out riding with Noddy Nixon, her uncle said.

"He's getting altogether too thick around here," the keeper complained. "I don't want to say anything, as Jess needs cheering up, and I guess he isn't such a bad sort. One thing I don't like though, he and that helper of mine, seem to have some sort of a secret between them."

"How's that?" asked Jerry, trying to speak as though he did not much care.

"Well, I was surprised to notice that a rich young chap, such as this Nixon boy seems to be, would know a fellow like Bill Berry. Bill's a good enough worker, but he's a sort of shiftless man, and I don't know much about him. He's tramped around considerable, he tells me, and I reckon there's lots he hasn't told me. But one day I saw him and young Nixon talking as though they had known each other all their lives. Now wouldn't that strike you as being sort of queer?"

"Oh, well, maybe it's all right," spoke Jerry,

warning his chums, with a look, to say nothing.

"But that's not all. The other day I saw young Nixon pass Bill a note, and when he saw I was watching, he got red, as though it was something to be ashamed of. I don't like it, and I'm going to be on the watch."

On their way home that afternoon, from the lighthouse, the boys talked over what Mr. Hardack had said.

"What do you make of it?" asked Bob.

"It's hard to say," replied Jerry. "Maybe they're up to some of their old tricks, trying to get us into trouble."

"Yes, and maybe they're trying to get Mr. Hardack and Jessica into trouble," put in Ned.

"Jealous, eh?" asked Jerry.

"Well I guess you don't like to see Noddy Nixon paying attention to Jessica, or to any other nice girl for that matter, any more than I do. I don't know as that's jealousy."

"No, you're right," came from Jerry, who spoke in a serious tone. "Of course we have nothing to go by, but I think there's something in the wind. I am almost certain Bill Berry stole that diamond ring from the bath house, and I'm going to tell Professor Snodgrass what I know about it. I shall also inform him where Bill is,

and he can do as he pleases about having him arrested."

"What about Noddy?" asked Ned.

"We'll see what develops. Maybe Noddy is mixed up in it, though I don't really believe he'd steal."

That night the boys, in their boat, went to the amusement resort, where they had first seen Noddy walking with Jessica. There was a minstrel performance scheduled, for the benefit of the local hospital. As they tied the craft to the dock, among a score of other boats, Ned remarked:

"I guess I'll stay here, fellows. I don't much feel like taking in the show."

"Want to sit and think of Jessica," said Jerry, with a laugh. "Well you are certainly getting moony, old chap. You'd better take some liver medicine. Come on, Bob, we'll see the fun."

"Yes, and get something to eat, too. Better come, Ned."

"No thanks, I'll stay here."

It was really nothing more than a whim on his part to remain behind in the boat. Ned was really getting quite fond of the girl at the lighthouse, but he did not admit it, even to himself. He had a vague feeling that he would like to be alone and think.

He stretched out on some cushions in the bottom of the craft, and was star-gazing to his heart's content. Next to the *Dartaway* was a large sailing sloop, which was there when the boys made fast to the dock. The high sides threw a deep shadow over the motor craft. Ned was disturbed from his reveries by the sound of some one walking along the dock. It had been silent for some time, save for the distant sound of the music, and at first he believed the boys were coming back. Then he heard voices he knew were not those of his chums.

"Is this the sloop?" asked a man.

"Yes," was the answer. "Get aboard where we can talk without being overheard, though I guess there's no one around."

Ned could hear the men going aboard the sailing craft. They went into the cabin, and then some one opened a port just above the boy's head, as he was stretched out in the motor boat.

"It's beastly hot in here," some one said.

"Yes, been shut up all day. Now, how much have you got done?"

"Well, I've found the steamer's due here in a few days now, and it's got a valuable cargo aboard. Stuff that will float easily. We ought to be able to pick up a lot of it."

"How about the lights?"

"That's all arranged. Bill has a job at the place and he is going to be in charge that night. It's Hardack's time off, and Bill will fix the lights so's to fool the pilot of the steamer."

"How's he going to do it?"

"Just cover the one flash, and make only two flashes just like the North light gives."

"Is there any one else likely to give trouble?"

"There's only the girl, and we can easily get her out of the way. Oh, it's going to be easy. We'll be there to help Bill if he needs it. Now — what's that?"

The voices suddenly ceased.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MOTOR BOAT MISSING

In his eagerness to listen to what the men were saying Ned had gotten up on his knees. In doing so he had knocked down a monkey wrench from a seat, and the tool fell with a clatter to the bottom of the *Dartaway*.

"Some one is listening!" he heard one of the men in the sloop exclaim.

"Nonesense," the other replied. "It was only an oar banging against the side of the boat."

"Some one was listening I tell you! I'm going out to take a look."

Ned decided it would not be wise for him to be found in the boat. While the man was ascending to the deck of the sloop the boy crawled noiselessly over the side of the *Dartaway* and hid behind a box on the wharf. From there Ned watched the man leap from the sailing boat to the dock, and take a careful look around, including making an inspection of the *Dartaway*.

"See anything?" asked the one who had remained in the cabin.

"No one around. I guess you were right."

"Course I was. Come aboard and we'll finish our plans."

With a rapidly beating heart Ned watched the man until he had disappeared into the cabin. Then without making any noise, for he wore rubber soled shoes, he hurried up the dock to the pavilion where the minstrel performance was going on. He wanted to tell his chums and decide on a plan of action.

"They're plotting to wreck a vessel," thought Ned. "They're going to do something to the lighthouse light. We must stop them."

There was such a big crowd at the show that the boy had some difficulty in locating his companions. When he did find them it was in the middle of a chorus, and Ned did not wish to disturb the audience in going to them, as the two lads were seated well up front. When he did reach them he whispered:

"Come out! I've got something important to tell you!"

"Leave us alone," spoke Bob. "Go back and dream about Jessica if you want to. This is fine, and we haven't eaten yet."

"Oh, hang you and your eating!" exclaimed

Ned in such a loud whisper that he attracted the attention of several around him.

His manner showed his chums there was something up, and without waiting for the show to be over they went with Ned. When he was outside he quickly told them what he had heard.

"Are you sure you weren't dreaming?" asked Jerry, half inclined to doubt what Ned had related.

"Come on, and I'll show you the sloop."

The boys went down on the end of the dock where their own, as well as the sailing vessel had been fastened. Ned was leading the way. As he reached the place where the *Dartaway* had been he stopped and rubbed his eyes.

"Why — why — I wonder if I'm on the wrong dock?" he said, staring about him.

"What's up?" inquired Jerry.

"Isn't this where we left our boat?"

"Sure, there's only one dock near here. Why?"

"Well, it's gone."

"What, the boat or the dock?" asked Bob. "Come on, tell us, I want to get back and have something to eat."

"The *Dartaway* is gone!" exclaimed Ned.

"So is the sloop! They've stolen our boat! They must suspect something!"

At first Jerry and Bob could not believe it. Then Ned went over again all that he had heard, telling how he had slipped away to inform them of how matters stood.

"They must have known it was our boat," said Jerry. "Was Bill Berry one of the men?"

"I couldn't see them plainly," Ned replied. "Their voices didn't either one of them sound like Bill's though. What's to be done?"

"We'd better give notice of our boat being stolen," said Jerry, "and think of some scheme to get home. After that we'll have to turn detectives and get the *Dartaway*."

The minstrel show was over when the boys went back to the pavilion, and the crowd was coming away. The dock was thronged with persons seeking their boats to make the run for home.

"Hello boys!" called a voice, and they saw Captain Jenkinson, of the *Three Bells* coming toward them. "You look as if something had happened."

"Something has," spoke Jerry. "Our boat's been stolen."

"Stolen! You don't mean it. How?"

Ned related how it had happened, saying nothing however of the conversation he had overheard.

"We'll tell the manager of the place, and he'll send out a general alarm," said the skipper of the *Three Bells*. "It isn't the first time boats have been stolen from the docks around here. I believe there's an organized gang. If we had a decent police force here it wouldn't happen so often."

The manager of the pavilion and amusement resort, who was also a sort of deputy sheriff, promised the boys to do what he could to recover their craft. He said he would have notices of the theft posted at his dock and all the other wharves along the coast.

"How you boys going to get home?" asked Captain Jenkinson.

"Walk I guess," replied Jerry with a laugh. "It's only about five miles by the shore road."

"Well I guess you'll not walk while there's gasolene in the *Three Bells*," was the hearty answer. "Get aboard. We'll cruise around a bit, and maybe we'll get sight of those rascals on the sloop. They probably sailed out to sea, towing your boat, and they'll be likely to hide it in some cove until the affair blows over."

Captain Jenkinson had a party of friends

aboard his boat, but there was plenty of room for the boys. There was much sympathy expressed for them, and every one volunteered to be on the lookout for the *Dartaway*.

In the powerful boat quite an area of the bay in the vicinity of the dock was covered, in a search for a sight of the sloop. It was a fairly light night, and a sailing vessel could be made out some distance away.

There were several false alarms, and once the *Three Bells* gave chase to a sloop that seemed trying to get away. But when they got up to her they found it was only a fishing boat getting a start for early morning work, and there was no sign of the boys' craft.

"Too bad!" remarked Captain Jenkinson, as he landed the boys at their dock. "But it's sure to turn up sooner or later. They'll not dare to sell her, and can only keep her hidden. There are not many places where a boat the size of yours can be tucked away."

It was kindly and well meant consolation, but the boys never felt in lower spirits than they did that night. Mrs. Hopkins tried to cheer them up, but it was hard work. She even suggested they hire another boat and make a search of the nearby harbors, for the missing one.

"I guess that's a good plan," said Jerry to his chums. "We'll do it to-morrow."

"What ought we to do about warning Mr. Hardack?" asked Ned, as they got ready to retire.

"Oh, I almost forgot about that," came from Jerry. "I guess there will be time in the morning. Besides, we want to think it over a little more."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECRET OF THE COVE

THE boys made inquiries the next morning and found it would be impossible to hire another motor boat. The season was at its height and all the craft were engaged. Several of their newly-made friends offered them the use of their boats for a part of each day, but the boys did not want to take them on this condition. Besides, they wanted to be away by themselves, as they had much to talk about.

"Hadn't we better warn Mr. Hardack?" asked Ned, when they had exhausted the possibilities of hiring a boat.

"I've been thinking of it," Jerry said, "and I don't see what particular good it would do. We only know half the story. Besides, those fellows might only have been talking to hear themselves talk. It's a mighty risky thing to wreck a vessel and tamper with a lighthouse. They wouldn't dare do it."

"But it wouldn't do any harm to tell the keeper what we know," Ned insisted.

"Only to get laughed at for our pains, in case nothing happened. Besides, how are we going to get to the lighthouse without a boat?"

"We can walk around by the shore, it's not more than ten miles," went on Ned.

"Love will find a way," sang Bob, and he had to jump back to escape a playful blow Ned aimed at him.

"I suppose we could," remarked Jerry. "Maybe it wouldn't do any harm to go around there and see how the land lays. We can sort of give him a hint, and warn him to be on the lookout for Bill Berry."

"That will be a good plan," agreed Ned. "When can we start? The sooner the better."

"Not until after dinner, I vote," from Bob. "I can't walk on an empty stomach."

"I don't believe you ever tried," Jerry said.

The boys inquired the best way to get to the lighthouse by going along the shore, and learned it was about eight miles. They started after lunch, and hard enough walking they found it, as most of the way lay through deep sand.

"This is awful," groaned Bob as he toiled along.

"Dry up, Chunky," from Ned. "It will do

you good. "Besides, think of what a service you may be doing."

"I'm thinking about my chances for supper."

The boys had gone about half the distance and were going along a series of high sand dunes, covered with a growth of tall, rank grass, when they were suddenly halted by a voice calling to them:

"Where you fellows going?"

They looked up, to see a roughly dressed man barring the path.

"I don't know's it's any of your business," Jerry replied hotly, for he resented the man's tone. "This is a free country."

"That's all right, my young friend," the man said with a sneer, "but this is private property, and we don't allow any trespassing on it. So you'd better be off if you know what's good for you."

"Can't we go along the beach?" asked Ned.

"No, sir, you can't go anywhere along here. We own for two miles back, and if you try to pass here you'll get into trouble. So be off!"

The boys hesitated. There was no way of proving that what the man said was not so, and they did not want to get into trouble. To get past meant walking two miles back in shore. As

they stood there, wondering what to do, another man came from somewhere in the tall grass and said to the first:

"The boat's in the cove. Floated in at high tide."

"That'll do!" was the quick retort, as though the first man feared his companion would say too much. "I'm warning these chaps off our land."

"Yes, and they'd better go if they know what's good for them," said the other.

"Oh, we'll go," came from Jerry. "We don't care about walking on your property. I guess we can manage without doing so."

The three lads turned and began to walk inland, across the waste of sand, which was hot with the afternoon sun. The coast at this point was rather high, there being a series of bluffs, which sloped abruptly down to the beach.

"What shall we do?" asked Jerry when they were out of earshot of the men.

"Nothing to do but to go around their place," said Ned. "It will mean about four miles more."

Bob groaned.

"It'll get some of that fat off you, Chunky," Jerry remarked with a laugh.

"It's all right enough for you to joke," growled the fleshy youth. "But I can't help it."

"I wonder what he meant by saying the boat was in the cove?" came from Ned.

"I was thinking about that myself," Jerry put in. "I didn't know there was a cove along here."

"Let's take a look," suggested Ned.

"How can we, without going back and meeting the men?"

"Easy enough," came from Jerry. "We'll walk along for a mile or so, then cut down along parallel to the coast and walk back toward the beach. We ought to come out right back of the cove, if there is one, or very near to it."

This was voted a good plan to follow, and, with no further objections from Bob, the boys trudged along. It was hot and hard work, but they were very anxious to find out the secret of the cove, as they believed the men had some object in not allowing them to pass.

The locality was a deserted one. It was half way between two summer resorts, and there was not a house in sight. It was about as lonesome a place as one could find in the midst of civilization. Nothing was to be seen but sand and rank grass.

"Do you s'pose these men had anything to do with stealing our boat and with the lighthouse

plot?" asked Bob, as he and his chums walked along.

"I'm not good at riddles," returned Jerry. "First we'll see what the cove holds."

They kept on for an hour and began to work their way in toward the shore again. They kept a careful watch for the men but saw no one. They came to a place where the weeds and grass were quite high. It was tangled together by the wind and they had to struggle to get through it. Jerry, who was in the lead, emerged on a clear, sandy place. He gave one look down and uttered a low cry.

"What is it?" called Ned.

"The secret of the cove!" exclaimed Jerry.

He pointed to a small body of water below them as they stood on a high sand bank. As the boys looked they saw a sailing vessel and another craft floating near a small dock.

"There's the sloop!" cried Bob.

"And there's our boat!" exclaimed Ned. "We have found her again!"

"Easy!" whispered Jerry as he sank down, pulling his companions to the earth. "There are the men!"

As he spoke three roughly dressed men came from a small shack near the dock, and walked to

where the sloop was moored. They were carrying boxes and bales aboard.

"Looks like the stuff we picked up from the broken-backed steamer," whispered Ned.

"I guess they're wreckers, who gather stuff that floats ashore," came from Jerry.

"And I'll bet they're the men I heard plotting about the lighthouse," said Ned. "We are on their track!"

"But how did they get their boat in here, and how did they float the *Dartaway* in?" asked Jerry. "This looks like a little lake."

"Isn't that a sort of creek over there?" asked Bob, pointing to an opening in the midst of the rushes that surrounded the cove.

"So it is. That's what he meant about high tide. They can only get in the cove when the tide is up, and makes an entrance by way of the creek."

"And, for the same reason, we can't get our boat out until high tide, and that will not be until late to-night," said Bob. "We'll have to wait until then."

"Lucky we have the chance," came from Ned. "I hope the coast will be clear."

"We'll get our boat, anyhow!" exclaimed Jerry. "I'd like to see those men keep her."

"We'll wait until there's water enough in the creek to float her out, and then we'll sneak down there, get in and start off before they know what's happened," spoke Ned. "I hope she's in running order."

CHAPTER XXV

AT THE LIGHTHOUSE

THE boys remained concealed in the high grass for some time. They watched the men moving about on the sloop and near the hut, but the thieves seemed to pay little attention to the motor boat.

"I wonder if they're getting ready for a trip?" said Bob. "That will make it easier. If they leave we can go down there and get something to eat."

"Oh, Chunky!" exclaimed Ned. "You —" but he could think of nothing appropriate to say, and so stopped short.

"They're all boarding the sloop," Jerry remarked, as he saw four men come from the shack and go on the sailing vessel. "Going out of the cove maybe."

"Can't, with the water as low as it is."

"I only hope they go to sleep in the shack," Ned remarked. "It will be easier for us then."

Through the long afternoon the boys waited.

The little camp on the shore of the hidden cove seemed deserted. None of the men was to be seen. Toward evening there arose a thin column of smoke from the galley of the sloop.

"They're getting supper," remarked Bob, with a sorrowful note in his voice.

"Never mind, Chunky, you'll get yours sooner or later," said Jerry as comfortingly as he could.

As it grew darker the boys noticed that the water in the cove was agitated. The sloop, and the motor boat rocked at their anchorages.

"The tide's coming in," said Jerry. "It will soon be time to act. I hope we can get to the *Dartaway* without being seen."

"We've got to," spoke Ned. "If they see us it means we'll have a lot of trouble. We must crawl along until we get close to her. Then we'll get in. I'll crank up, you can steer, and Bob can use a boat-hook to fend us out from the shore."

"Lucky she's headed the right way to get out of the cove," Jerry remarked. "It will save time by not having to turn her."

Thus it was arranged, and the boys, tired and hungry, remained hidden in the grass until it was dark enough to put their plan in operation.

They watched the sloop closely. After their supper aboard, the men came on deck and stood

conversing a while. The boys could just make out their forms in the dusk. One seemed to be doing the most talking, and he frequently motioned off toward the sea.

"Acts as if he was trying to get them to go somewhere," spoke Bob softly.

But in the end the men went ashore, and after looking to the fastening of the motor boat and a small rowing craft tied near it, they went into the shack. Presently lights shone from it, and Jerry said:

"I guess we can sneak down now. Go easy, everybody."

Cautiously the boys left their hidding places and began to descend the slope that led from the bluff to the shore of the cove. Every now and then they paused to listen. They could hear the men laughing and talking in the hut.

Foot by foot they crept nearer. There was a path leading from the top of the sand dune to the hut, but the boys did not take this, fearing they would be seen. Instead they crawled on their hands and knees through the grass. The process was a painful and slow one, for their arms and legs came in contact with sand burrs, while innumerable insects attacked them. But they suffered in silence.

"Easy now, we're almost there," came from Jerry.

At that moment the door of the hut opened, and a man looked out. The boys, with wildly beating hearts, crouched down. They feared they had been discovered.

"See anything?" called some one from inside the hut.

"No," was the answer, "I thought I heard some one at the boats, but I guess it was the tide swinging the sloop. Looks like a storm. Hope we'll get one by to-morrow night. It'll be just what we need," and the man re-entering the hut, closed the door.

For a few seconds after this the boys remained silent in the grass.

"Lucky escape, that," murmured Bob. "Five seconds more and he'd caught us."

Cautiously they resumed the progress toward the boat. Nearer and nearer they came until Jerry, who was in the lead, was able to step over the side into it. Ned and Bob followed. The latter grasped a boat-hook and stood ready to fend off when the start was made. Ned and Jerry cut the bow and stern lines with which the *Dartaway* was made fast to the little dock. They worked quickly and silently.

Jerry turned on the gasolene, and waited a few seconds to allow it to fill the carburettor, as the boat had not been run in several hours. Then he switched on the spark.

"Turn her over!" he whispered to Ned, who was in the engine cockpit.

The big flywheel went around under the impulse of Ned's sturdy arm. There was a sort of cough from the engine. Then came a chug, followed by a splutter, and the motor got into action.

"Fend her off! She's headed into the bank, and I can't steer her out quick enough!" cried Jerry to Bob.

Chunky pushed with all his strength, on the pole, against the bank. Slowly the nose of the boat came out from the shore. The screw was churning the water into foam. Jerry spun the wheel around, and headed the craft for the channel, the opening of which he could just make out.

At that instant the door of the hut flew open, and in the light which streamed forth several men could be seen running toward the shore.

"Hi there! Stop! Bring that boat back!" they called.

"Guess not! She's ours!" Ned called back.

"We're off!" exclaimed Jerry in a low tone.

"She's running like a charm. They'll never catch us!"

There was the sound of feet on the dock. Then came a squeaking of a pulley block, the creak of ropes and the rattle of the boom on the mast.

"What's the use going after them in the sloop?" they heard some one cry. "There's no wind. Take the rowboat!"

The thud of men jumping into the small craft tied near the sail boat could be heard. There was the rattle of oars, and then the splash of them in the water.

"They'll never get out of the channel," the boys heard one of the men say. "We'll catch 'em before they strike open water."

"You will, eh?" thought Jerry. "We'll see about that."

The engine was speeded up. Jerry was beginning to distinguish things better as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness on the water. The channel was a narrow and winding one, but the incoming tide had made it plenty deep enough.

The boys could hear the men frantically rowing after them, but it was a hopeless race. The *Dartaway* was speeding ahead. It kept Jerry busy steering to avoid running into the bank, but

presently the channel widened and he had no more difficulty. On sped the craft until the little creek emerged into a small bay, which, in turn, opened into the ocean.

"We're safe now!" cried Jerry. "Let's light the lamps, and put for home."

The men in pursuit had been left far behind. While Jerry held the boat on her course up the beach Ned and Bob kindled the red and green side lights and the search lantern. In about two hours the *Dartaway* was safe at her dock, and the boys were telling their story to a number of their friends.

"We must notify the police and get after those thieves," said Captain Jenkinson. "They're dangerous men to have around. It's a good thing you discovered that cove. They probably have been hiding there a long time."

But the primitive police system of the shore summer resort could not be gotten in readiness for a raid that night, and when some constables did go to the cove the next morning they found the sloop gone and the hut seemingly deserted.

The boys found their boat had suffered little damage at the hands of the thieves. Some tools had been removed as had a few of the cooking utensils, but these were easily replaced.

"Now I guess we'd better make a trip to the lighthouse," remarked Ned, the next afternoon, when the *Dartaway* had been put in shape. "We ought to warn Mr. Hardack."

"And, incidentally, I suppose, Jessica," added Bob.

"I think they'll give the whole plan up, now they see we are after them," Jerry added. "I believe they've cleared out for good."

"It'll do no harm to go over and see Mr. Hardack," Ned insisted. "If we find out there's no likelihood of the thing coming off, we needn't say anything."

They got to the lighthouse about five o'clock. Mr. Hardack greeted them warmly..

"Come right in," he said. "Sorry Jessica is not home. She was just wishing some visitors would come, and about an hour ago that Nixon chap came along in his boat and took her for a ride."

Ned seemed less happy than when the start had been made.

"But come in," the lighthouse keeper went on. "I've got some fresh milk and Jessica baked some cookies this morning."

Bob was the only one who looked pleased.

As the boys were getting out of their boat they

saw a man coming down toward where the oil lamps were usually filled. At first they thought it was Bill Berry, but a second look showed them it was not.

"Got a new helper?" asked Jerry, trying to speak calmly.

"Yes, my other one skipped off yesterday. This chap came along and I hired him. Had to have some one in a hurry."

CHAPTER XXVI

HELD PRISONERS

THE boys glanced at each other. This was something they had not counted on. Evidently Bill's companions had told him what had happend, the night the motor boat was stolen, and he had fled, for some reason. It looked as if the scheme of the plotters had fallen through.

"Did Bill — er — did your other helper say where he was going?" asked Ned.

"Not a word. He was filling the lamps — let's see — it was yesterday morning — come to think of it. A boat pulled up at my dock, and a man got out and spoke to Bill. I had to go up in the tower, then. When I came down Bill was gone and so was the man in the boat."

"Rather strange," commented Jerry.

"So it struck me," Mr. Hardack went on. "But then you know these chaps are sort of tramps. They're here to-day and gone to-morrow. Always roving around. Of course in the winter I have a regular assistant the government

provides, but in the summer time, just as at the life saving stations, they take things a bit easier. However, this other man came along, and he seems a lot nicer than Bill Cherry or whatever his name was."

The keeper led the way up the steps to the house, the boys following.

"Guess it's just as well not to say anything," spoke Ned in a low voice. "They've given up the plot. We'd only be laughed at if we mentioned it."

His companions agreed with him, glad enough to feel there was going to be no attempt to wreck a ship by means of false lights. The keeper set out a big pitcher of cool milk and a plate of cookies, which, as Bob said, were the best he ever ate, but then Bob was apt to say that about anything in the culinary line.

"Yes," Mr. Hardack was saying, "Jessica would have been glad to see you. Poor girl, she has quite a trouble on her mind. I've been hoping things would straighten out, but they don't seem to. Her father, he —"

"Ting-a-ling-ling-ling-ling!" rang the telephone bell. The keeper sprang to answer it. The boys listened idly to the one-sided conversation.

"Yes, this is Mr. Hardack."

"What's that? Kate sick?"

"Come over? Yes — er — that is — Yes, I can come. I forgot I had a new helper. I'll be right over. Anything serious?"

"Can't tell, eh? Well I'll come as fast as I can," and he hung up the receiver.

"Any trouble?" inquired Jerry.

"Looks like it," the keeper said. "My sister is quite sick. Taken suddenly. They want me."

"Where does she live?"

"It's about six miles back in the country. I guess I can make it and get back here by nine or ten o'clock. I wish I knew whether it would be safe to leave the new man in charge."

"Don't the regulations provide for it?" asked Ned.

"Oh, yes, it's my day and night off, and I have a right to go. But I sort of hate to leave the light with him. He knows all about it, however, and he's got a government civil service certificate. He knows just what to do, for he's been in lighthouses before. I wish I knew what to do."

"Let us stay and help him," suggested Ned.

"Will you?" asked Mr. Hardack eagerly.

"Sure," chorused Jerry and Bob.

"Then I'll do it. I want to see my sister.

Her health is not very good, and the doctor said she might die in one of her spells. I'd feel safe to go if I knew you boys would stay here and help the new man if necessary."

"We'll see to things," exclaimed Jerry. "It will be jolly fun to be partly in charge of the lighthouse."

"Whatever happens, don't forget two things," cautioned Mr. Hardack.

"What are they?"

"The light must be lit at sunset, and it must be kept burning all night. It must revolve regularly, even if it has to be done by hand, and there must be a white flash and two red ones, at proper intervals. But, you needn't worry about that. The machinery is in perfect order. The man will light the lamp, and start it going. It only has to be trimmed once in a while. I'll be back before ten o'clock. When Jessica comes, she'll get supper for you."

Ned said nothing, but he looked as if that would be the best part of it all, while Chunky's eyes lighted up at the mention of another meal.

Mr. Hardack was soon ready to go. He had to walk the entire distance, as there was no conveyance handy, but he said he did not mind that.

"I'll introduce you to the new man," he said,

calling his helper from where he was still busy filling the lamps. "His name is John Elkwood."

The assistant did not seem a very good natured chap. He only nodded to the boys, when Mr. Hardack introduced them, and, as he went back to his work, Jerry heard him muttering to himself.

"Well, I guess I'll get under way," said the keeper as he started off.

"I say," called Elkwood after him.

"What is it?"

"I don't need those boys here. I can get along without 'em. They'll be in the way."

"I want 'em to stay," was Mr. Hardack's answer, at which the boys heard the new man muttering again.

"Not very friendly," commented Jerry. "Still we can get along I guess."

The boys spent an hour going over the lighthouse, with which they were now rather familiar. In the meanwhile Elkwood was busy filling lamps, there being a number used in the big tower. He attended to the light in the big glass lantern and spent some time oiling the machinery.

"I wonder what time Jessica is coming back?" said Bob, as they sat down in the sitting room.

"Was that one thought for her and two for the supper?" inquired Jerry.

"It's about time she should be back, I think," came from Ned.

"He's only thinking of her, you see, Chunky," Jerry went on.

"No, but it seems to be getting foggy," added Ned, "and Noddy isn't any too good a hand at managing a boat. I wish she hadn't gone out with him."

"Oh, she'll be all right," commented Bob. "Tell you what's let's do. We'll get supper and have it all ready when she comes. I guess we can find the things to eat."

"Trust Chunky for that even if he doesn't have any dishes on the table," Jerry remarked. "Well, we'll get the meal and invite Noddy to it."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed Ned. "When he sees us here he'll go back where he came from, fast enough."

The boys found a well-stocked pantry, and, because of their camping experiences had little difficulty in getting a meal ready. By this time it was nearly seven o'clock. Ned kept rather anxious watch of the hours.

"Let's go down to the dock and see if we can get sight of her," he suggested.

"Who?" asked Bob.

"Why Jessica. It's time she was back."

Though he did not say so, Jerry was also a little anxious. The weather looked anything but promising, and he had small respect for Noddy's ability to manage a motor boat in a calm, let alone a storm. Still there seemed to be no cause for alarm.

The craft might have been stalled, but he did not believe Noddy would venture far from shore, and, in the event of a breakdown, he could signal to other boats, as there were several about the harbor.

It was still quite light, and would not be dark for another hour. It was no use worrying, Jerry thought, until there was something to get excited over.

They all went down to the dock, however, and scanned the sea for a sight of the boat containing the girl and Noddy. Though there were several craft in sight the boys did not notice Noddy's, which they had come to know from seeing it several times. It was one with a blue hull, distinguishable for some distance.

"I vote we eat," said Bob, as he turned to go back to the house.

"It wouldn't be polite," suggested Ned. "We'e only visitors."

As they walked up the stone steps leading to the house, the boys were met by Elkwood. The man had a scowl on his face.

"It's time you chaps were moving," he said in surly tones. "I don't want you hanging around here."

"Why, Mr. Hardack asked us to stay," put in Jerry.

"I don't care whether he did or not. I'm in charge here. This is government property and I'm the boss. I tell you to go, and don't lose any time over it, either."

"I guess we'll stay," said Jerry coolly. "We told Mr. Hardack we would, and we're going to."

"And I say you're not. I order you off. It's against the regulations for you to be here after dark."

"It isn't dark yet," spoke Ned.

"None of your lip!" exclaimed Elkwood. "Are you going to leave?"

"Not until Mr. Hardack comes back!"

"Then you can take the consequences!"

Elkwood put his fingers to his lips and blew a shrill whistle. At the signal three men sprang out from behind some rocks that bordered the stairway. They rushed at the boys, who were too surprised to stir. One of the men was Bill Berry.

"We've got you this time!" their old enemy cried.

The next instant the boys were struggling with the men, who endeavored to throw bags over their heads.

CHAPTER XXVII

TRYING TO ESCAPE

THE struggle was a sharp but short one. The boys were no match for the husky men, and though the lads kicked and punched with all their might, they could not save themselves. In a few minutes they were securely bound, and with the bags tight over their heads, were picked up by the men.

"Where you going to put 'em?" they heard Elkwood ask.

"The storehouse is a good place," Bill Berry replied. "They can yell there all night and never be heard. Take 'em to the storeroom!"

The boys felt themselves being carried up the steps. Then they could tell, by the muffled footfalls, that they were being taken into some dungeon-like place.

"Shall we leave the bags on?" one of the men asked.

"No, I don't want to smother 'em," Bill replied. "They can't make themselves heard in

here, no matter how they yell. Besides, there's nobody around. We've got Hardack out of the way and he'll not be back until morning."

"You forget the girl. She may be back any minute."

"I guess not. Noddy has charge of her. He'll detain her some way or other. Those motor boats have a habit of breaking down, you know."

Then the bags were taken from the boys' heads, but their bonds were not removed, and they were laid down on the cold stone floor of the storeroom. With sinking hearts they heard the men withdraw and lock the door, leaving them prisoners in total darkness.

For a few seconds none of the boys spoke. They were so surprised and shocked at the suddeness of it all they did not know what to say. At length Jerry's voice broke the silence:

"Are either of you hurt?"

"Only scratched and bruised," replied Ned.

"My wrists are cut by the rope, and my legs hurt," said Bob. "I'm hun—"

"Let up on that!" exclaimed Jerry with a violence he seldom used. "This is no time to think of eating. Boys, it's a mighty serious matter. These men are going to wreck the ship!"

"Do you think so?" inquired Bob.

"Of course; what else is it? They have carried their plot into effect, but they did it differently than I expected. Bill Berry's going away was only a blind, and it fooled us. This new man, of course, is in the game. He came along as soon as Bill left, so no one else would be hired for the place."

"Do you think they got Mr. Hardack away by a false message?" asked Ned.

"Of course they did. It was all in the game. Noddy is helping them."

"If I ever get hold of him I'll make him wish he'd never had a hand in it," and Ned spoke so sincerely that his companions knew he would keep his word. They thought of Jessica out alone with the bully, who, possibly had purposely disabled the engine to keep her from getting back to the lighthouse.

"Oh, if we could only do something," exclaimed Ned.

"We've got to!" cried Jerry. "We can't let the ship be wrecked by them changing the light."

"But how we going to stop 'em?" asked Ned.

"We must try and get loose," Jerry replied. "They tied us in such a hurry maybe some of the knots will slip. That's our only plan. There's

no use calling for help. It's just as Bill said, no one would hear us. Try and work your hands free."

They all tried but to little purpose. The ropes were firmly tied. Strain as they did they could not loosen the fastenings, and at last they had to stop, as the cords cut into their flesh.

"Well, they certainly got us into a trap!" exclaimed Jerry as, once more, he tugged at his bonds.

Suddenly Bob uttered an exclamation.

"Are you hurt?" cried Ned.

"Something cut my wrist!"

"What is it?"

"A piece of glass, I think."

"Glass! Good!" came from Jerry. "Can you get it in your hands?"

"I have it."

"Roll over towards me, and bring it with you."

Bob did so. He came close to where Jerry was still tugging away at the ropes.

"How did you find it, Bob?"

"I was trying to get the knot loose and something sharp touched my wrist. I felt around until I found the glass."

"What's your plan, Jerry?" sung out Ned.

"I'm going to get Bob to hold the glass and

I'm going to saw through the ropes on my hands. Then I'll set you all free!"

"Can you do it?"

"I'm going to make a big try."

Then in the darkness they began their efforts to escape. Bob stretched out on his face, holding the jagged piece of glass from a broken bottle between his bound hands. By careful feeling Jerry edged his way over to him, until he could bring his wrists close to Bob's. Then both boys turned on their side, back to back, and Jerry began sawing at the cords that bound him.

It was hard work, and more than once they had to stop because their arms ached. Several times Jerry's hands slipped and the glass cut him, but he did not mind. Back and forth he drew the rope over the keen edge until he could feel the strands giving way.

"It's almost loose," he said.

In another minute he gave a triumphant cry.

"I'm free!"

"Now to loosen us!" called Ned.

Jerry reached into his pocket for his knife. Luckily the men had not searched them, or taken anything away from the boys. With his hands free Jerry soon had the ropes from his legs. Then he cut the bonds of Ned and Bob. Their limbs

were stiff, from being tied so long, but vigorous rubbing soon restored the circulation.

"Now to escape!" exclaimed Jerry. "We must find a way out of this, and stop the rascals from setting the false lights!"

They stumbled about in the darkness. The storehouse was filled with boxes and barrels, over which they fell as they felt around, seeking for some door or window. At last Ned cried out:

"Here's a door!"

The other boys made their way toward the sound of his voice.

"It's locked!" said Jerry, as he pushed against the portal.

"Can't we batter it down with a box or a barrel!" Bob said.

They searched around in the gloom for something to use, but could find nothing. Everything was too heavy.

"Maybe we can cut around the lock with our knives," suggested Ned.

In the darkness and silence they toiled. They could hear nothing from the men they knew must be in the lighthouse, working to cause the destruction of the steamer. They felt as if they were imprisoned in a vault.

"I wonder if we can get out and be in time?" said Ned. "It must be quite late."

"Don't talk! Work!" came from Jerry.

They redoubled their efforts to cut around the lock. But the door to the storeroom was thick and strong, and the lock was a heavy one.

"It's no use," declared Bob after an hour's hacking away at the tough wood. We'll have to stay here until they let us out."

"Don't give up," Ned spoke.

"Hark!" What's that?" asked Jerry.

The others listened.

"They've started the machinery!" cried Bob. "The lenses are turning."

"Yes, and they are the wrong ones! They will get the ship on the rocks!" cried Jerry. "We must escape!"

Terror struck to the boys' hearts. They had tried every means and failed. The plotters had outwitted them. They could do nothing. They beat upon the door with their fists as though by their feeble efforts they could break it down.

Ned stumbled aimlessly in the darkness, seeking for something with which to batter down the door. As he passed by a pile of boxes and barrels he uttered a cry.

"Have you found anything?" asked Jerry.

"Something, yes! A window in the wall! An open window!"

Bob and Jerry hurried to where they heard Ned's voice. As they did so he had climbed up on a box. He pressed his face close against the wall. A cool wind fanned his cheek.

"There is an opening!" he exclaimed. "But it is too small for us to get out of. It's only a ventilating window. But wait! Someone is coming!"

The boys almost held their breaths. Then Ned called in a loud whisper:

"Jess! Jess! Here we are! Let us out! Some bad men are in charge of the place and are going to change the lights! They are going to wreck a steamer!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

JESS TO THE RESCUE

"WHO are you talking to?" asked Jerry.

"Jess, of course," replied Ned, greatly excited. "She's outside. Jess! Jess!" he called again. "We are locked in the storeroom!"

The boys waited anxiously. Then, from without, came a whisper that sounded loudly through the darkened room.

"What has happened? Where is my uncle? Who are you?"

"It's me; Ned," was the reply, whispered from the prison. "They captured us! Have you a key? Can you let us out? How did you get away from Noddy?"

"Oh, this is terrible!" cried Jess. "How did it happen?"

She was standing under the small slit in the masonry that served to let air into the storeroom. The light from a lamp in the kitchen of the place streamed out from a window full on her, so Ned could see the girl plainly, though of course she could not see him.

"Why you are all wet!" cried Ned. "Did you fall in the water?"

"No, I jumped," came the tense whisper. "What shall I do to let you out?"

"Can you get the key to this place?" asked Ned. "If you can, sneak into the house, and open the door, let us out and we'll call help, and try to prevent the men from changing the light."

"Where is my uncle?"

"He was called away, by a false telephone message, we believe, to see his sick sister! The men put up a game to get him away! Quick Jess, or it will be too late!"

Ned saw the girl step back out of the path of illumination and gaze upward. As she did so she uttered a half suppressed scream.

"They are changing the light!" she uttered in a shrill whisper. And there's a storm about to break! What shall I do?"

As she spoke there came a low rumble of thunder off to the west and a flash of lightning.

"Let us out if possible!" whispered Ned. "They are so busy with the light they may not notice you. Get the keys and let us out!"

"I will! I will!" exclaimed Jess. "If I can only succeed!"

Ned saw her dart around the corner of the

house. Then she was out of his line of vision. They could only wait developments now.

"Do you think she can do it?" asked Jerry.

"She will if it's possible," replied Ned. "Only there is not much time. My! But it's going to storm fierce!"

A loud crash of thunder sounded, making the stout lighthouse vibrate. The flashes of lightning showed through the ventilating window, illuminating the small apartment with a weird glow. The wind was howling about the place.

"There'll be a heavy sea on," said Jerry. "The ship will get upon the rocks and go to pieces. Then these scoundrels will go out and pick up the cargo."

"There may be many lives lost," exclaimed Bob. "The life saving station is short-handed. They all are in the summer time."

"If Jess can only get the keys!" Ned murmured.

It seemed like an hour before there sounded a tapping on the storeroom door. Ned sprang to answer it.

"Are you still there, boys?" they heard Jess ask.

"Yes! Yes!" whispered Jerry. "Have you the keys?"

"No, the men must have taken them."

"Then get an axe and see if you can't break the lock."

"It is too strong. Besides they might hear the blows."

"Where are the men?"

"In the lantern tower," the girl replied. "Wait a minute, let me think of a plan."

Outside the storm was raging. Locked in the storeroom the boys felt like beating at the door with their fists to break it down, so they might get out, change the light, and save the steamer.

"I have it!" Jess whispered through the big keyhole. "I will burn the lock out."

"How?" asked Ned.

"With a hot poker. I'll heat it in the kitchen stove. I'll burn a lot of little holes all around the lock, and then I can knock the piece of door out! The men can't hear that!"

"Good!" cried Ned. "Hurry Jess!"

They could hear the girl moving about the kitchen. The rattle of iron on iron came to their ears. Presently there was the smell of burning wood. It grew stronger. Then a dull red point pierced the door, and came through into the storeroom.

"That's the first hole!" whispered Jess. "I'll burn them as fast as I can."

To the boys it seemed as if there was half an hour between each reappearance of the glowing point of the poker, but it was only a few minutes. There were seven holes burned, when they heard Jess hurry away.

Then resounded the tramp of feet in the lower part of the lighthouse. A few seconds later the boys heard voices.

"Is it working all right?" a man asked.

"You bet," was the reply. "Now you and Bill had better put off in the sloop. She'll strike pretty soon, and you may pick up passengers with a lot of valuables."

"It's blowing pretty hard to go out in the sloop," one of the crowd objected.

"Oh, don't get chicken-hearted," was the sneering response. "You and Bill have got to go. Me and Jim will stay here and work the light. We can tell when the rockets go up that she's struck, and then we'll skip. We'll meet at the cove."

The voices died away, as though the men had left. The sound of the storm increased. Anxiously the boys waited for Jess to come back.

It was several minutes before she did so. Then she whispered through the keyhole:

"I had to run and hide when I heard the men coming from the tower. Two of them have gone out, and the others have gone back to the light. We must hurry!"

Once more came the smell of burning wood, and once more the dull red point of the poker began to show. But it was slow work, for the door was thick, and of hard material. Then too, the poker would get cool carrying it from the stove to the portal.

But Jess worked like an Amazon. Back and forth she went with the hot iron, burning herself several times when it slipped. But she gave small heed to this. She wanted to save the ship and the honor of her uncle, who might be blamed for losing control of the lighthouse.

Hole after hole was burned. Now Ned began trying to knock out the piece of door containing the lock. He found a small stone and hammered on the weakened wood. But it was still too strong for the feeble instrument he had.

"Ten more holes and I think it will come out," the girl whispered.

Out on the deep, struggling through the storm which had suddenly broken, was a large steamer,

laden with a rich cargo. There were not many passengers, as it was from a South American port, but these few, as well as the crew, had no warning of the danger that threatened them.

In the bow stood the lookout, scanning the expanse of angry water for a sight of lighthouses and headlands that would indicate the channel up the dangerous coast. Suddenly off to his left there shot out two brilliant red flashes.

"North light two points off the port bow!" he called to the pilot.

"Lookout?" called the Pilot.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Are you sure that's the North light?"

"Aye, aye, sir. The south light shows a white flash and two red ones. These were only two red. There they are again, sir."

"Yes, I see them," as once more the false lights flashed across the sea. "We must have passed the South light while the weather was thicker. I'll have to put her in a bit."

Then the pilot, deceived by the light, steered the vessel over toward the ledge of dangerous rocks, instead of keeping out, as he would have done, had the two red flashes been preceded by a white one.

But in the lighthouse three brave boys and as

brave a girl, were striving to aid the ill-fated steamer. Would they be in time?

Jess made hole after hole, though her arms ached, her eyes smarted with the smoke, and her hands were burned in a number of places.

Again and again Ned beat with his stone on the wood around the lock. The circle of holes was complete at last.

"It's giving away! It's loosening!" cried the boy. He struck with all his force. The stone flew from his hand, and fell through the opening that suddenly appeared. The lock had been burned away, and the heavy door swung inward. The boys were free.

"Now to change the lights!" cried Jerry, as, followed by his chums he dashed toward the winding stairs that led to where the big lantern lenses revolved.

At that instant the door of the kitchen flew open and Mr. Hardack entered, wild and disheveled, dripping water from the storm which was now raging at its height.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE RIGHT LIGHTS

"WHAT has happened!" cried the keeper. "The light is flashing wrong! There is a steamer outside the bar! It will be wrecked! Who did it? Where is my assistant? There's been foul work here! I was waylaid on my way back when I found my sister was not ill. I just managed to get away from the men. Speak, some of you! Quick!"

The keeper was panting from his exertions and from the excitement. His face was drawn and pale, and his eyes were wild, while his hair, matted by the rain, for he had lost his hat, straggled about his forehead.

"The scoundrels are in possession of the tower!" cried Jerry. "We must attack them and set the right light!"

"Come on!" cried the keeper, seizing the poker Jess had used to burn the door. "Come on! I'll give 'em battle!"

His eyes glared, in the fierceness of his righteous

anger, at those who would do so dastardly a deed.

"Come on!" cried Ned, seizing a heavy billet of wood.

"I'll call the police on the telephone!" exclaimed Bob, springing for the instrument. "We'll need help!"

"I'll not wait for the police!" fairly shouted the keeper. "I'll tackle 'em single handed if need be!"

Bob rang up central, and, not waiting to be connected with the distant police station, told the operator what the trouble was, imploring that aid be sent promptly. Then he ran to join his companions. Jess was crying in one corner of the room.

Mr. Hardack led the way to the stairs which extended up inside the tower to the lantern. He fairly ran up the stone steps, followed by the boys. He was shouting challenges to the men as he ran.

"Let me get at you!" he yelled. "I'll show you how an old man can fight!"

Suddenly from above them a door slammed shut. There was the clicking of a lock. Then, as they came to the heavy portal, which gave access to the room where the lantern was, a voice cried:

"You're too late this time, old man!"

Too late! The men had shut themselves up in

the top of the tower, and could control the working of the light to suit their evil purposes. The keeper could not get in.

Mr. Hardack beat upon the door with the poker. Ned hammered it with the block of wood.

"Let me in!" cried the aged man. "Let me in! Do you want to send the ship to the bottom?"

"That's just what we do!" was the mocking response.

"Get an axe and chop the door down!" cried Jerry.

"It would take too long," replied the keeper, in a strangely calm voice. It is bound with iron, and is double thick. There is no help for it. The steamer will be lost!"

Footsteps were heard coming up the stairs.

"Maybe help is at hand," said the keeper hopefully.

Then Jess came into view. In her hand she held something which she extended to Mr. Hardack.

"Here is your old horse pistol, uncle!" she exclaimed. "It is loaded with a heavy charge. Fire it through the lock and shatter it! I heard you pounding on the door and knew they had locked it!"

"Hurrah for you, Jess!" called Ned, and the girl blushed through her tears.

Mr. Hardack placed the muzzle of the ancient weapon against the big keyhole. He hesitated a moment, listening to the roar of the storm without, and the steady whirr of the machinery in the tower, as it revolved the false lenses.

Bang!

It sounded as though a cannon had been fired, so loudly did the report of the pistol echo in the narrow tower. There was a splitting and rending of wood, a snap as of broken springs and a clatter as pieces of the lock fell on the stone steps.

"Come on, boys!" cried the old man, as he threw all his weight against the door. The shattered lock gave, and they rushed through the smoke on up the steps.

"Go back! Go back!" cried two men standing on the top landing. Behind them glowed the big light. It almost blinded the boys. They hesitated a second or two.

"Scoundrels!" cried the keeper.

He raised the poker threateningly and leaped forward.

"Come on! All together!" yelled Ned. "We can handle 'em! Come on, Jerry and Bob!"

Forward they went, the boys and the aged keeper, straight at the two men. The fellows held big wrenches in their hands. Jerry saw one aim a blow at Mr. Hardack. It struck the old man on the side of the head, but, though he staggered, he did not fall. Then he raised his poker and brought it down on the arm of the man who had hit him. The wrecker gave a cry and the wrench fell from his nerveless fingers.

Ned sprang at the assailant of the keeper. The fellow stepped back. He had lost the use of one arm from the blow of the poker. Ned grabbed his other hand and bore him to the stone floor. There was a hard struggle, but Ned held on. Mr. Hardack, recovering from the blow on his head, come to the boy's aid.

In the meanwhile Jerry and Bob had attacked the other man. He kept them at bay for a little while by waving the big wrench back and forth in front of him. The boys tried to dodge in but could not. Then Jerry suddenly fell to the floor. Before the man knew what was up the boy had reached forward, under the swinging tool, and grabbed the man by the legs. He gave a strong yank, and the wrecker went down in a heap. Bob threw himself on top of him.

For several seconds there was a hard struggle.

Both scoundrels tried to break away, but the boys and the keeper were too much for them. At last they were quiet.

"The light! The light!" cried Mr. Hardack. "We must set the right light!"

"I'll do it, uncle!" exclaimed Jess, running into the room. She had been hiding on the stairs, waiting the outcome of the struggle. "I'll set the right light!"

She leaped over the prostrate body of the man her uncle and Ned were holding down. Into the lantern room she went.

It was the work of but an instant to rip from the big white lens, the black piece of paper the men had pasted over it to conceal the flashes. She threw it on the floor.

Then out through the storm, over the tempestuous sea, there flashed the right signal,—a white glow, followed by two red ones.

"Oh, that it may be in time to save the ship!" the girl prayed.

Out on the deep the big steamer pitched and tossed in the grip of the waves. The lookout was scanning the blackness for the sight of the next lighthouse. Suddenly there flashed across his eyes a white shaft of illumination, followed by two red ones. The pilot saw them at the same time.

"Something's wrong!" the steersman exclaimed. "There is the South light now! We have been standing in! We are almost on the rocks! Some one changed the lights!"

There were frantic signals to the engine room. The pilot spun the steam steering gear around so fast he almost broke the rudder chains. Slowly the great steamer changed her course and stood out to sea.

Yet so near had she been to the rocks and sand bars that five minutes more and she would have been lost. The passengers asleep in their staterooms never knew how close they were to death.

Back in the lighthouse there were anxious hearts, hearts that beat high lest soon might be heard the booming guns of a ship in distress, or soon might be seen the flaring rockets that told a steamer had gone on the rocks.

Suddenly from below, at the foot of the tower, above the roar of the storm, a voice called:

"What's wrong here? Where are you, Hardack? What's the matter with the light?"

"It's Salt Water Sam!" shouted Jerry. "Help Sam! Come up and bring ropes with you!"

There was the welcome sound of feet ascending the stone stairway. Into the room came the old

sailor and Captain Jenkinson. They took in the situation at a glance. In a few minutes the two scoundrels had been securely tied.

"Is the light all right?" was Sam's first question, for he knew what that meant on such a night.

"Thanks to Jess, it is," replied Ned, and the girl ran away to escape the admiring eyes.

"How did you get here?" asked Jerry of Sam.

"Why some of us happened to be out fishing just before the storm broke, and we noticed the light wasn't flashing right. I hurried ashore and met Captain Jenkinson. He had noticed the same thing, so we decided to investigate. We came over in his boat, the *Three Bells*. What has happened here?"

CHAPTER XXX

JESSICA'S FATHER — CONCLUSION

"THE scoundrels tried to change the light and wreck a steamer coming up the coast," replied Mr. Hardack. "If it hadn't been for the boys here they would have succeeded."

"If it hadn't been for Jess we could have done nothing," put in Jerry. "They had us locked up."

"Let's have the whole yarn," suggested Sam.

Ned related what he had heard of the plot that night he had hidden in the *Dartaway,* and told how he and the boys on reaching the lighthouse had been left in charge with the new assistant while Mr. Hardack went to see his sick sister.

"And that message was all a fake," said the keeper. "My sister wasn't sick at all. I couldn't find out who sent it, but I thought something was wrong, and I hurried back. On the way I was stopped by two men who wanted to pick a quarrel with me. They tried to take me off to a lonely hut, but I broke away and came on through the

storm. You can imagine my feelings when I got here and saw the light flashing wrong."

Then the boys told the rest of the tale, including the successful efforts of Jess to burn the lock from the door.

"But we haven't heard how she happened to arrive at just the right time," said Bob. "Call her."

The girl came into the kitchen where they all were, the two prisoners having been placed in the storeroom.

"What happened to you, Jess?" asked her uncle.

"I jumped overboard and swam ashore," said the girl.

"You jumped overboard?"

"Yes, that Nixon fellow took me for a ride in his boat. Then the engine got out of order, or he pretended it did, and we couldn't get back. I wanted him to signal to some other boat but he wouldn't. Then I got mad. He kept me out there quite a way from shore, saying all the while the engine would soon be fixed. But when I saw him taking some screws out I knew he wasn't trying to fix the machinery, but was playing a trick to detain me. Then I jumped into the water and

swam. I didn't have much trouble. I'm a good swimmer, and it wasn't so very far."

"You're a brave girl!" exclaimed Sam warmly, and Jess tried to run away again, but they would not let her.

The police whom Bob had telephoned for soon arrived, and took charge of the two men. They were eventually sent to prison for long terms.

Search was made for the others of the gang, but they, including Bill Berry, had escaped in the sloop. As for Noddy Nixon, he left the summer resort that night, disappearing soon after he brought in his boat from which Jess had escaped. At the hut near the cove, later, among Bill's belongings, was found the diamond ring and the case of specimen mosquitoes stolen from Uriah Snodgrass.

"Well, this will delight the professor!" cried Jerry, when he heard of the find. "I'll wager he'll think more of the mosquitoes than of the diamond ring." It may be added that the professor was delighted over the recovery of his property and when he heard of what the boys had accomplished he praised them highly.

It was learned afterward that Noddy had no idea of the serious plot the men had planned. Bill Berry had enlisted the youth's aid in getting Jess

out of the way, on the pretense that only a harmless trick was to be played on the keeper. Noddy's previous acquaintance with the girl made this easy. But Noddy, after Jess left him so suddenly, thought it best to make himself scarce. Bill, it seems, had written to him early in the season to come to the summer resort near the lighthouse.

It was the next afternoon when the boys were again on a visit to the lighthouse that they learned how near the steamer had been to the dangerous rocks. Some men of the life saving station had seen her approach, and then veer out again suddenly as the light was changed.

"I declare I don't know how to thank you boys," said Mr. Hardack. "You certainly are wonders."

"Jess had us all beaten," spoke Ned, wondering where she was.

"Oh, yes, poor Jessica. I wish I could help her out of her trouble as she and you helped me."

"What trouble?" asked Ned.

"Didn't I ever tell you? I started to several times, but it must have slipped my mind. Her father has been missing for several months, and I've not been able to locate him. He's my only brother, quite an old man, with white hair, whiter than mine."

The boys looked at each other. They all had the same thought,— of the man in the railroad wreck.

"He was a miner out west," Mr. Hardack went on. "He went there several years ago and left his daughter with me, because it was a wild country he was in. I got word a few months ago that he had started east, having made quite some money. He was to come here but he never arrived. We've been waiting for him since, and Jess is quite worried. I wrote to the persons who used to know him, but they said he had left the mining camp, and they did not know where he was. I wish I could locate him."

Ned felt a lump coming up in his throat. The other lads seemed strangely affected. It was Jerry who spoke first.

"Mr. Hardack," he said. "I don't want to raise any false hopes, but I think we can put you on the track of Jessica's father."

"Where is he? Tell me! Oh, I must go to him if he is in trouble!"

"If he is the man I think him to be, he is in the hospital at Cresville. We saved a man from a railroad wreck, who, in his delirium, murmured something about 'Jess' and the 'great light.' I

think he must have meant your niece, and the 'great light' referred to the lighthouse."

"Oh, I only hope so!" exclaimed Mr. Hardack. "The loss of her father has almost broken Jessica's heart. She is in mourning for her dead mother. How can we find out if the man of the wreck is my brother?"

"I can telephone to Dr. Bounce," replied Jerry. "The man may have recovered by now."

It took some time to get the long-distance connection on the telephone from the lighthouse to Dr. Bounce. While it was being made Jess came into the room.

"Jess — dear — Jessica," stammered her uncle. "Would you mind getting dinner?" She left the room, a little surprised at the serious looks on the faces of the boys and her uncle. "I didn't want her to hear until we know if it's true," said the uncle in a whisper.

At last Jerry was able to converse with Dr. Bounce. The boy's voice trembled as he inquired about the man of the wreck. The others could only hear one side of the conversation, but they guessed the rest.

"You say he's getting better, doctor? That's good. Has he been able to give his name? He

has? What is it? Tell me quick! A lot depends on it! Pack? Oh! Hardack! Are you sure? Walter Hardack!"

"It's him! It's him! That's my brother's name!" exclaimed the keeper, jumping up and down in his excitement. "Oh! Jess! Your father's found! The boys did it! Oh! Jess! Praise the good Lord!"

Jess came running into the room, wondering what was up. She looked at her uncle. There were tears in the old man's eyes.

"Your father's found! You're father's found!" was all he could say, as he hugged the now weeping girl to him.

"Come on," said Ned softly. "We can return later." And the chums withdrew.

Mr. Hardack soon called them back, and made them tell every detail of the wreck. They surmised that Jessica's father had been on his way to the lighthouse when he was injured. His appeal to the boys to find his daughter had been no more than the raving of delirium, caused by the injury to his head, but it had worked itself out in an unexpected way.

The next day, with Ned as her guide, Jess started for Cresville, and a few hours later was clasped in her father's arms. He had come suc-

cessfully through a serious operation and was now on the road to recovery.

"Well," remarked Jerry to Bob, when Ned had gone away, "we certainly had plenty of excitement the last few days. Ned is right in it to the last. Guess Jessica likes him. Well, she's a mighty nice girl."

"Right you are," replied Bob. "Say, it wasn't any mistake to come here for a vacation. I hope we will have as much fun next year."

"I hope so," Jerry added. "I wonder if Ned will come back for the rest of the season?"

"Bet he'll stay in Cresville now that Jess is there."

"Well the summer is almost over," said Bob a little sorrowfully. "Of course we can't expect to foil a gang of wreckers again, but I hope there'll be something just as lively."

There was, and the boys had what they considered even better fun than centred around the lighthouse. Their further doings will be told of in the next volume, to be called, "The Motor Boys in Strange Waters; or, Lost in a Floating Forest."

"Come on," said Bob, after a pause. "Let's go out in the boat for a spin. It's a fine day."

"A little lonesome without Ned, though."

"Well, we'll see him again, soon."

They went down to the dock, where they found Salt Water Sam gazing contemplatively into the water. He was softly singing to himself:

"The Mary Jane, she was a ship
As fine as one could wish.
I used to sail the seas in her,
And sometimes I would fish.
One day when I was sailing
I chanced to catch a shark.
I put him on exhibit
In a little seaside park!"

"Well, well, boys, I didn't hear you coming," the sailor went on. "I was just thinking of the fun we had."

"Come on for a sail," invited Jerry.

Then the two boys and the old man got into the *Dartaway* and put off toward the mouth of the harbor. And here, for a while, we will take leave of them.

THE END

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